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# AJANTA

PART FOUR



# AJANTA

THE COLOUR AND MONOCHROME REPRODUCTIONS OF THE AJANTA FRESCOES BASED ON PHOTOGRAPHY

*With an Explanatory Text by  
G. YAZDANI, O.B.E.*

*and Appendices on the  
Painted and Incised Inscriptions by*

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## PART IV : TEXT

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## PREFACE

THE publication of this Part, and the completion of the book, are a source of no small gratification to me, since I have been engaged on the work for nearly a quarter of a century, during which period many interruptions occurred, notably those caused by World War II and the economic upheavals resulting therefrom, which at times completely unnerved me. Thanks, however, to the enlightened policy of the Hyderabad State, and the active support of Mr. Sajjad Mirza, Secretary, Education Department, and his distinguished successor, Shree L. N. Gupta, the importance of the work, both under the previous governments and the present régime, was fully realized and generous grants were made towards it, notwithstanding urgent financial stringency and other difficulties.

I am also grateful to art-critics and connoisseurs for the encouragement extended to me through press-reviews or private letters, emphasizing the unique position of the Ajanta frescoes in the history of the art of the East. I further owe a debt of gratitude to the general public for the large number of copies so eagerly purchased by them, although the price of the publication is quite high, and also for their keen interest in visiting these magnificent monuments of Indian art without regard to distance or cost of travel. Among the happy group of visitors may be seen people of many countries, but the largest number consists of the country-folk whose looks of wonder and joy indicate a new spiritual experience based upon their age-old religious faith.

The general arrangement of this Part is the same as that of the previous Parts, but the number of monochrome and litho plates has been considerably increased with a view to making the publication more comprehensive in its scope and more instructive to the student. The Appendix dealing with inscriptions has some additional illustrative plates which have been arranged by Dr. N. P. Chakravarti, Archaeological Adviser to the Government of India, and Dr. B. Ch. Chhabra, Deputy Director-General of Archaeology in India, who have jointly edited the inscriptions published in this Part, and whose expert assistance I acknowledge with grateful thanks.

The proofs of the colour-plates of the first three Parts of the book were corrected by Mr. Sayed Ahmad, but as he has now retired from the Curatorship of the Ajanta Caves, the proofs of the colour-plates included in this Part have been corrected on the spot, after comparison with the original frescoes, by Mr. Jalal-ud-Din, the artist attached to the Office of the Director of Archaeology of Hyderabad. I therefore thank Dr. P. Sreenivasachar, the Director of Archaeology of Hyderabad, for his courtesy in permitting Mr. Jalal-ud-Din to do the work, and also the artist himself for performing the task with such great care and ability.

The printing of the text, the preparation of the collotype and litho plates, and the binding of the text as well as of the Plates portfolio have been done by the Oxford University Press,

#### PREFACE

Oxford, and I am grateful to Mr. Charles Batey, the Printer, and to his expert staff for executing the work in an artistic manner. I am also under obligation to Messrs. Henry Stone & Son, of Banbury, and to their able Managing Director, Mr. J. A. Milne, C.B.E., for their care in printing the colour-plates of this Part.

I should also acknowledge with grateful thanks the scholarly help which I have received from the beginning in the compilation of the Ajanta Volumes from Dr. L. D. Barnett, C.B., Hon. Librarian Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland. I am also indebted to Professor A. Sharma, Head of the Sanskrit Department, Osmania University, Hyderabad (Dn.), for assistance so readily given in regard to the transliteration of Sanskritic proper names and religious terms, and the furnishing of references to early Buddhist and Brahmanic literature. Lastly, I must express my thanks to Mr. F. J. Fielden, formerly Professor of English, Aligarh University, for suggesting some valuable improvements in the language of the original draft of the book.

G. YAZDANI

ORANGE GROVE  
HYDERABAD (DECCAN)

*6th October, 1952*

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# EXPLANATORY TEXT

## GENERAL REMARKS

### *Plates I-III and LXXV-LXXXII*

IN Part III the paintings of the back wall of the veranda, Cave XVII, have been described; the present Part (IV) deals with the paintings on the remaining walls and window-sills of the veranda and the entire surface of the interior of the *vihāra*, including its rock-walls, ceiling, and the pedestals of some pillars. The style indicates the high-water mark of the art of Ajanta; and as the *vihāra* has an inscription carved on a wall adjoining the south-west corner of the veranda, the date of this climax can be fixed with certainty. Verses 21-26 of the inscription mention that during the reign of Harisheṇa, of the Vākāṭaka dynasty, 'on a spur of the Sahya (hill) . . . excavated this excellent monolithic hall, containing within a *chaitya* of the King of ascetics (the Buddha). . . . He (also) caused to be dug (near it) a large cistern pleasing to the eyes. . . .' King Harisheṇa, according to eminent historians, flourished in the period c. A.D. 475-500.<sup>1</sup> This inscription and another carved in Cave XVI are important, because they fix with precision the period during which Ajanta painting developed its highest artistic and intellectual qualities; after this period there set in a gradual decline in the standard of art, the outlook becoming narrow, and the forms and patterns soulless and imitative. The figures of the Buddha seated on a throne with attendants on either side, painted and carved so lavishly in the *chaityas*—Caves XIX and XXVI, and the floral designs and geometric patterns of the ceilings of the entire group to the left of Cave XVII—show that the originality and force previously evident in the art of the cave-paintings have vanished, and the painter in his conception of beauty seems to have been satisfied with mere semblance, without making any effort to capture reality.

In the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. Ajanta, under the enlightened patronage of the Vākāṭaka kings, became an important centre of Buddhist religion and art, and votaries from distant climes visited the place to be initiated into the religious orders, and also to acquire proficiency in the art of painting. This view is confirmed by the paintings at Sigiri (Sigiriya) in Ceylon, at Bāmiyān in Afghanistan, at Turfān in Central Asia, and at some places in China, which all exhibit clear influence of the Buddhist art of Ajanta. The support given by the Vākāṭaka kings to the propagation of the Buddhist faith and art may have been secured through the religious zeal of Hastibhoja and his son Varāhadeva, the ministers of the last two kings of the dynasty, Devasena and Harisheṇa, who apparently had embraced the Buddhist religion, and whose names are preserved in the inscriptions of Cave XVI at Ajanta and of the *vihāra* at Ghatotkacha in the vicinity.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The inscription was cut at the instance of a prince whose name, through the abrasion of the rock, is now lost, but who probably ruled over Khandesh as a feudatory of the Vākāṭaka king Harisheṇa. *Hyderabad Archaeological Series*, Monograph No. 15, p. 3, edited by V. V. Mirashi. <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Monograph No. 14, p. 2, and *The Ghatotkacha Inscription*, pp. 8-17, edited by V. V. Mirashi.

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The Chālukyas who succeeded the Vākāṭkas in the sovereignty of the Deccan during the first half of the sixth century A.D. were perhaps not as favourable to the Buddhist religion as their predecessors, although the shrines which the Chālukyas built at their capital in Bādāmi are largely copied from the Buddhist *vihāras*. Through lack of royal patronage, art at Ajanta began to decline rapidly in the latter half of the sixth century A.D., and there is no *vihāra* or *chaitya* at Ajanta which can be assigned with certainty to the seventh century A.D. The Buddhist shrines of Ellora excavated during the seventh century A.D. show clear influence of the Brahmanic architecture of South India; and in regard to painting, the art shown in the specimens preserved there is not only conventional but actually effete and etiolated. The apparent cause of the decline was the fact that master-painters professing the Buddhist faith were for theological reasons not employed on the adornment of the Brahmanic shrines, and the art of painting, which had reached its climax through local Deccan genius, stimulated of course by the rich tradition and glorious visions of the Buddhist religion, fell to the position of a decorative craft when practised by Brahman artisans, notably those of South India. This view may startle those academicians who consider the paintings of Ajanta to be representative of Gupta art, and date them between the sixth and seventh centuries A.D., although there are in fact specimens of painting in Cave X at Ajanta with inscriptions which, according to expert epigraphists, have been unanimously assigned to the middle of the second century B.C. The art of painting even in these early examples is fairly well developed, and indicates practice and a continuity of tradition over hundreds of years. There are specimens in Caves IX and X which tell a continuous story of the development of technique from the second century B.C. to the fifth century A.D. For instance, the subject painted on the wall of the left aisle of Cave IX, in which a group of votaries is shown approaching a *stūpa* bedecked with umbrellas, is not far removed in period from the group of votaries painted on the left wall of Cave X, since the same colours—red ochre, yellow ochre, terra-verde, lamp-black, and the white of lime—have been used in both subjects. There is a complete absence of blue, which does not appear at Ajanta until the fourth or fifth century A.D. The surface had been prepared by first placing on the rock-wall a layer of clay,<sup>1</sup> which was subsequently covered with a coat of fine lime. On this ground the outlines of figures were drawn in black or red tints, and afterwards colours were filled in. The colours in the early painting are flat, with no washes to indicate depth or volume such as are to be noticed in later paintings.

In Cave IX there is another painting representing a herdsman controlling fabulous animals

<sup>1</sup> In preparing the clay plaster special care seems to have been observed. First the clay was taken from the slimy beds of water-pools, apparently following the practice of contemporary potters, who selected fine earth for their ware from such places. Afterwards the earth was made into a paste and mixed with molasses, bdellium (*gūgal*), rice-husk, and the leaves of some herbs, with a view to ensuring that the plaster should stick well on the wall and not peel off when dried. The clay plaster so cleverly prepared, however, ultimately led to the ruin of a large number of

paintings at Ajanta, because it became a hotbed for the development of insects during the monsoons. The insects not only bored holes in the paintings but ate up the earth mixed with vegetable and sticky matter and created hollows behind the painted surface, which, for lack of support, has either fallen down or is hanging loose. The Archaeological Department of Hyderabad, under the guidance of expert archaeological chemists, has recently succeeded in fixing back on the rock-wall many of these loose paintings.

PLATES I-III & LXXV-LXXXII

through his herculean strength by holding their necks, hind-legs, or tails. The subject has evidently some mythical significance, because it is represented in the early sculpture of the Deccan at several places, notably at Kuda, Nāsik, and Amarāvatī. The representations at the latter three places belong either to the first century B.C. or to the first century A.D., and the painting at Ajanta also appears to belong to the same period, when the subject was popular with both sculptors and painters. The drawing of this painting shows distinct progress both in indicating movement and in showing a realistic effect in the form of animals.<sup>1</sup> The advance of art may further be noticed in the delineation of the *Shad-danta Jātaka* on the right wall of Cave X, where the portrayal of the animals, the beauty of trees and flowers, and the expression of human feelings are represented in a very effective manner. The colours are the same, the human figures represented are still non-Aryan, and there is no deepening or lightening of colour-washes such as are to be noticed in later paintings; yet the grandeur of trees, the grace of human forms, and the beauty of animal figures are admirably depicted. This painting probably belongs to the third century A.D., to which period belong some of the sculptures of Amarāvatī, which have a close affinity to the paintings of Ajanta in regard to the pose and plasticity of the female figures. In this subject the painter has also shown a well-developed conception of ideas in the arrangement of the various episodes of the *Jātaka* and a certain dramatic effect in the scene in which the rānī faints at the sight of the tusks of the *Shad-danta* elephant who had been her husband in a previous birth.<sup>2</sup>

Dramatic effect and the emotional feeling are still better shown in another scene painted on the same wall representing the *Śyāma (Sāma) Jātaka*, in which the remorse of the rājā who unwittingly killed Śyāma with an arrow shot by him, the wailing of his blind parents, and ultimately, by an act of providence, the restoration to life of Śyāma and the bestowal of vision upon his parents, are very graphically delineated. The drawing of the figure of Śyāma possesses the grace of the classical sculpture of Europe, while the head of the father of Śyāma indicates the 'pathos' which is to be noticed in the Italian paintings of the Renaissance period, notably in the portraits of Jesus Christ. The figures of deer are also admirably drawn in this scene.<sup>3</sup> This painting is not labelled with any inscription which might indicate its date, but as the *dramatis personae* delineated therein, both by their dress and features, are seen to be early inhabitants of the Deccan, it may be assigned to a period extending from the last quarter of the third century A.D. to the first quarter of the fourth, that is, to a time immediately preceding the sovereignty of the Vākāṭakas; for the extent of their dominions and their matrimonial relations with the Guptas and the Nāga kings of Padmāvatī (Gwalior State) would have led a large number of people from the North to enter the Deccan and settle there.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ajanta*, iii, Plate XVII.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 32-37 (text), Plate XXX; see also Cowell, *Jātaka*, No. 514, v, 20-31.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Plate XXIX.

<sup>4</sup> Prabhāvatī-guptā, daughter of the Gupta emperor Chandragupta II (c. 375-414) was married to the Vākāṭaka king Rudra-sena II (c. 385-90(?)). Earlier, Gautamiputra, son of the Vākāṭaka king Pravara-sena (c. 275-

335(?)), was married to the daughter of Bhava-nāga, the Nāga king of Padmāvatī; and although Gautamiputra pre-deceased his father and did not succeed to the throne, yet his son Rudra-sena I, who ruled after Pravara-sena, was much helped by his maternal grandfather Bhava-nāga in maintaining his authority against his foes. The name of Bhava-nāga is included in the genealogy of Vākāṭaka kings noticed in contemporary inscriptions. As a general rule

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In Cave X on the back wall of the *chaitya* there are some paintings representing a few scenes from the life of the Buddha which may be assigned to the fourth or fifth century A.D., but for the art of this period it will be best to study the paintings of Caves I, II, XVI, and XVII. The latter two caves contain inscriptions of the Vākāṭaka king Harisheṇa, of the Basim branch, and Cave I is a replica of the *vihāra* at Ghaṭotkacha, both in plan and in the identity of certain sculptures, notably the one representing four deer with a common head, which subject is not to be found in any other Buddhist *vihāra*. According to a contemporary inscription, the *vihāra* at Ghaṭotkacha was cut in the rock by Varāhadeva, the minister of Devasena (c. A.D. 455–75). The interest of these kings and their ministers and feudatory chiefs in the Buddhist faith and the art of painting, as it then flourished at Ajanta, would have familiarized the painters of Ajanta with court life, because such royal personages and their entourage would have frequently visited Ajanta to pay their homage to the sacred shrines and the holy persons who resided there. It is also likely that some of the holy monks may have been invited to the royal courts to teach the Law, and they may have been accompanied by artists belonging to the Order for the purpose of embellishing with paintings the shrines which existed at the capital towns. This surmise gains support from the fact that the paintings at Bāgh appear to have been copied from the paintings at Ajanta, since not only is there similarity in technique and in poses and dresses, but the dance-scene of the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* painted on the left wall of Cave I at Ajanta is reproduced with almost identical figures on the rock-wall at Bāgh.<sup>1</sup> The influence of the Gupta kings, according to eminent historians, did not penetrate as far as the Deccan in the fourth century A.D., but the art of Ajanta during this century and the fifth made tremendous progress and its fame reached distant countries. Votaries from Ceylon, Afghanistan, Central Asia, and China visited Ajanta, and, after learning the art practised there, adorned the walls of the shrines in their motherlands with similar paintings when they returned to their own countries. The frescoes of Sigiri in Ceylon,<sup>2</sup> Bāmiyān in Afghanistan,<sup>3</sup> Turfān in Central Asia,<sup>4</sup> and Tun Huang in China,<sup>5</sup> show unmistakably the influence of the art of Ajanta. Some of these paintings are assigned to the fifth century A.D., so that their painters must have visited Ajanta in that century or even earlier (fourth century A.D.). Kālidāsa mentions 'the hall of painting' in the *Mālavikāgnimitra*, and it is not unlikely that he may have visited Ajanta, familiar as he was with the court of the Vākāṭaka kings.<sup>6</sup> The *Vishṇudharmottara* was compiled in the seventh or eighth century A.D., but its

maternal grandfathers are mentioned in royal genealogies when they have rendered conspicuous help to their daughters' sons. Cf. *A New History of the Indian People*, vol. vi, edited by R. C. Majumdar and A. S. Altekar, pp. 95 and 103.

<sup>1</sup> *Bāgh Caves*, published by the India Society, London, Plates D and E.

<sup>2</sup> A. K. Coomaraswamy, *History of Indian and Indonesian Art*, pp. 162–3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> A. V. Le Coq, *Die buddhistische Spätantike in Mittelasien*. This work contains many plates showing the in-

fluence of the Buddhist art of the Deccan in Middle Asian countries.

<sup>5</sup> Paul Pelliot, *Les Grottes de Touen Huang* (Paris, 1914–24), and Arthur Waley, *A Catalogue of Paintings recovered from Tun-huang by Sir Aurel Stein* (London, 1931).

<sup>6</sup> Dr. A. S. Altekar writes: 'It is very likely that Kālidāsa lived for some time at the Vākāṭaka court and we may well presume that a part of his *Meghadūta* was composed at Rāmtek. His only work that can be definitely ascribed to the Deccan of the Vākāṭaka age is the Prakrit poem *Setubandha*, written by King Pravarasena II (c. A.D. 410–40) and revised by Kālidāsa.' *History of the Deccan*,

PLATES I-III & LXXV-LXXXII

author writes that his work is based on older treatises, which were probably compiled during the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., when the art of Ajanta was at its zenith.<sup>1</sup> The technical details given in the *Vishṇudharmottara* regarding the preparation of the surface before the laying on of the colours are identical with those to be seen at Ajanta; even the ingredients of the *rinzaffo* (clay-plaster) are the same as those found by chemical analysis of the clay-plaster of the Ajanta paintings.<sup>2</sup>

The familiarity of the Ajanta artists with court life is amply illustrated in the four caves (I-II and XVI-XVII) referred to above (p. 4). The royal pavilions containing richly decorated thrones and curtains and awnings with pearl tassels, the princes and princesses wearing gorgeous jewels and draped in expensive silks or gold and silver brocades of exquisite designs, the musical entertainments, the animal-fights, the hunting excursions, the stately cavalcades, comprising elephant-riders and horsemen as well as infantry, and the march of armies and the violence and turmoil of the battlefield, are all depicted by the hand of one who has observed these scenes at close quarters.

Religious zeal and ardour, and noble qualities of the heart such as sympathy for the oppressed, charity towards the indigent, mercy even involving personal sacrifice by the bestower, love for the entire creation, human beings as well as animals, even reptiles, are most effectively delineated in the art of this period. Royal pomp and splendour are regarded with indifference as compared with the higher glory of enlightened being or spirit. The influence of the priestly class at the royal courts is shown with respect, but in certain cases also with a touch of irony. On the right wall of Cave XVII, the head of the Brahman who warns the rājā not to be lured by the charm of the disguised ogress, in the *Simhala Avadāna*, exhibits the artistic skill of Rembrandt in character-painting.<sup>3</sup> In another subject painted in Cave I on the wall of the back corridor, in which two princesses are bringing trays of offerings to the Bodhisattva Avalokiteśvara, the head of the elderly minister accompanying the rājā is a masterpiece of art both for expression and realistic treatment of features.<sup>4</sup> And who would not be impressed by the ugly features and the devilish grin of Jūjaka, the avaricious Brahman in the *Viśvantara Jātaka*, when he receives the ransom-money for restoring to the father of Viśvantara his two children, who, having been given to the wily Brahman as a gift, had been maltreated by him in order to extort a large sum as ransom from the rājā? This scene is painted on the wall of the left aisle in Cave XVII.<sup>5</sup> In the representations of the priestly class we notice people from all parts of India: those with a tuft of hair on the crown of the

vol. i, Pt. III, p. 200, and *A New History of the Indian People*, p. 112, footnote 2, and p. 114.

<sup>1</sup> Stella Kramrisch, *Vishṇudharmottara*, p. 5 (revised edition).

<sup>2</sup> The five prime colours (minerals) are also the same as those to be found at Ajanta, and the practice of first drawing the outline of the subject in red, black, or white is in conformity with the technique of Ajanta. *Vishṇudharmottara* (pp. 50-51) mentions other colours as well, such as vermillion, copper-sulphate, silver, and gold, but

these were apparently used for illuminating manuscripts, an art which may have originated independently in Northern India and which is still practised there. The latter art is calligraphic in technique and differs altogether from the art of the mural paintings of Ajanta. The earliest paintings of Gujarāt exhibit a calligraphic form in their outlines.

<sup>3</sup> *Ajanta*, iv, Plates L d and LVI b.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, i, Plate XXXI.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, iv, Plate XX b.

### AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

head and twisted moustaches, hailing from Benares and Prayāg; the long-haired Oriyā Brahman naked down to his waist, with only a striped scarf (*anigochhā*) round his shoulders, such as he wears to this day;<sup>1</sup> and the wrinkled face of the Madras priest with horizontal lines of paint drawn across his forehead as a religious symbol.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to people from various parts of India, the inhabitants of Afghanistan, Bactria, and China are also represented in the paintings of this period (fourth to fifth centuries A.D.). For instance, the group of rulers and chiefs who are shown coming riding on horses and elephants to listen to the First Sermon of the Buddha, painted on the left wall of the antechamber of Cave XVII, includes figures whose features, headgear—the fur-brimmed conical caps—and embroidered coats resemble those of the people of the Frontier Province and Afghanistan today.<sup>3</sup> These districts constituted the province of Gandhāra, the people of which embraced Buddhism from a very early period, and the reputation of the sacred shrines of Ajanta will have prompted the votaries of the Buddhist faith in the former province to visit this shrine as pilgrims. Further, Malwa and the entire zone of Western India, comprising Kathiawar, Surāshṭra, and the Konkan, had been governed by Śaka princes, styled the Western Satraps in history, from the first century B.C. or A.D. to the end of the fourth century A.D.; and as several of these princes were ardent supporters of the Buddhist faith, the familiarity of the Ajanta artists with Śakas or people of Western Asiatic countries is not surprising. The Bacchanalian scene painted in several places on the ceiling of Cave I, and the quaint figure in the veranda of Cave II,<sup>4</sup> with sunken cheeks and a tuft of hair on his chin, wearing a skull-cap and a striped pair of socks and drinking wine with his boon companion, probably an Indian as his physiognomy shows, confirm the above view.

In the first decade of the fifth century A.D. Fa-Hian visited the Buddhist shrines and monasteries of Bihar and Tirhut, the towns on the banks of the Ganges and Jumna, and also travelled down the country along the eastern coast, whence he took a boat for Ceylon and stayed in that island for nearly two years. It is not known from his work whether he visited Ajanta, but a monastery of the *Dakṣiṇa-deśa* described by him resembles in certain physical features the group of sacred shrines at Ajanta.<sup>5</sup> He however mentions that artists were deputed by kings to copy the paintings executed on the rock-walls of certain Buddhist shrines.<sup>6</sup> The representation of a holy mendicant in the *Viśvantara Jātaka*, painted on the left wall of Cave XVII, shows a person with characteristic Chinese features,<sup>7</sup> which suggests that the artists of Ajanta were not unfamiliar with Chinese pilgrims who from time to time visited Ajanta with a view to acquiring religious lore; and those among such visitors who possessed the artistic capacity to learn painting may well have been initiated into the technique of the style which was prevalent there at that time.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Ajanta*, i, Plate XXXVI a.

vol. i, p. lxviii, footnote 83, and vol. ii, p. 214, footnote 80.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, iv, Plates XX and XLV.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. i, p. xxxv.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Plates XXXVIII–XXXIX.

<sup>7</sup> *Ajanta*, iv, Plate XXIII.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, i, Plate XXIX a; and ii, Plate XI a.

<sup>8</sup> Some art-experts, notable among them being Fergusson, have noticed resemblance to Chinese art, and in this connexion Griffiths has observed as follows:

<sup>5</sup> This monastery is described by Hiuen Tsang as well (Book X). Some annotators have suggested that it was situated in the Chanda District; see Beal, *Buddhist Records*,

"The reference to Chinese work in the above extract is

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In regard to this style, it should be stated that although there are no cast shadows at Ajanta, yet the contours of the body are amply defined by the emphasizing of the outline and by the deepening of the colour-washes. This technique is not found in the earlier paintings of Ajanta, but it is prominent in the later work of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. Another device adopted during this time is the use of streaks or small patches of light colour to enliven and give expression to the face. The artists of Ajanta, like the sculptors of India in all parts of the country, were eager from the beginning to produce an effect of completeness in their creations, and they have reproduced the beauty of the human body, as well as of animals, by giving their subjects a variety of delightful poses. The idea of movement combined with grace of poise is admirably suggested, the axis of the majority of the figures changing several times from head to feet without producing any effect of unnaturalness, on the contrary adding charm to the attitude.

To produce the effect of perspective a number of devices have been adopted: for instance, in some places deeper colours have been used for the background, so that the figures painted in front in lighter colours may stand out in relief. Sometimes black dots have been added with the same object, as can be seen in the representation of the Great Bodhisattva in Cave I. The artist in this case has painted the head of the Bodhisattva in golden brown, and the long hair, which falls on his shoulders, in jet black. The effect of perspective is further enhanced by a deep green background, the darkness of which has been increased by small black dots.<sup>1</sup> The idea of perspective is better suggested in another scene in Cave I, in which the drawing and colours of the steps and rows of pillars show the inmates of the two pavilions in different appropriate planes.<sup>2</sup> It is true that the drawing of hills as represented by red or other colour bands is conventional in the extreme, and similar conventionality is to be found sometimes in the case of architectural forms; but the charge that the artists of Ajanta did not understand perspective is not justified, for the drawing of the round pavilion in Cave XVI, in which the birth of the Buddha is shown, is perfect in this respect.<sup>3</sup>

In regard to human forms the art of Ajanta is closely allied to that of the sculpture of Amarāvatī, so much so that if the photographs of some of the *Jātaka* scenes of Amarāvatī be placed side by side with the photographs of some of the paintings of Ajanta it will be difficult to differentiate between them. To appreciate this fact fully, the figures of women shown in the *Chāmpeya Jātaka* at Amarāvatī should be studied, for in the style of pose, the suppleness of limbs, and several artistic features, they are identical with those represented in the paintings of Ajanta.<sup>4</sup> This close resemblance of form is apparently based on an artistic tradition which was evolved in the Deccan as a result of the religious beliefs and aesthetic ideals which were common to the sculptors of Amarāvatī and the painters of Ajanta and inspired both groups equally.

interesting, for though flatness and want of shadow can scarcely be considered Chinese characteristics—seeing that early Italian, like other good mural decoration, is marked by these qualities—it is undeniable that in the drawing of the human eye, and sometimes of the whole figure, and in many ornamental details, there is a decidedly Chinese

turn.<sup>5</sup> Griffiths, *Paintings of Ajanta*, i, 7-8.

<sup>1</sup> *Ajanta*, i, Plates XXIV-XXV.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Plates XX-XXII.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, iii, Plates LXI.

<sup>4</sup> G. Yazdani, *History of the Deccan*, vol. i, Pt. 9, Plate IIIa.

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As regards colours it has been observed above that down to the third century A.D. there is a complete absence of the blue tint, but in later work ultramarine is to be noticed freely, and it has admirably withstood the effects of time; colours of this shade of blue look as fresh today as when they were laid on fifteen or sixteen hundred years ago. Some expert chemists have suggested that the Ajanta artists made their blue pigment from *lapis-lazuli*, beads of which are to be seen in great abundance on the ornaments shown in the paintings of Ajanta.<sup>1</sup> Apart from blue there is a rich variety of other colours, notably the various shades of vermillion and terra-verde, which were doubtless produced by mixing with other colours. In regard to the 'binding medium' the chemical analysis of fragments of the painted surface has revealed that instead of any vegetable gum some kind of animal-skin glue was used, although in the *Vishṇudharmottara* tree-resins and the pulp of the *bel* fruit (*Aegle marmelos*) as well as glue made from buffalo skin are included in the list of the binding media in vogue in India at some time or other.<sup>2</sup> Animal-skin glue is still used in Japan, where it is called *nikawa*.

The paintings of this period also throw considerable light on the social and economic conditions of the Deccan. Woman's place is generally inside the house, where she is shown behaving quite freely with her consort, but in court-scenes she is generally represented in a bashful mood.<sup>3</sup> She is always most devoted to her husband and accompanies him even in exile.<sup>4</sup> She soothes feelings of anger where harm to any person is threatened.<sup>5</sup> Her dress, although scanty, shows good taste both in style and choice of material. There is a large variety in the designs of garments for the upper part of the body, ranging from a mere strip (*brassière*) to the tight-fitting half-sleeved bodice (*choli*), and the full-sleeved shirts with slits (or cuts) on back and sides to show the beauty of form to advantage as well as to ensure freedom of movement.<sup>6</sup> The material for these garments is sometimes almost transparent, a gossamer-like fabric, the tradition of which goes back to a very early period, as we know because the diaphanous muslins of Kalinga (Orissa) are mentioned in the *Periplus*. The other materials are silks and brocades with floral designs. The Deccan has been noted for its fabrics from ancient times, and both Greek and Roman writers mention this industry when describing the articles exported from the ports of the Western Coast of India. The lower garment of the ladies generally consists of a *sārī* which comes up to the waist-line and does not cover the back and the shoulders, except in the case of elderly ladies, such as Mahājanaka's mother.<sup>7</sup> Ladies of Western Asiatic countries are shown wearing long full-sleeved coats and low skirts.<sup>8</sup>

Princes of royal birth have their bodies bare down to the waist-line, but the lavish display of jewellery round their arms and necks and on their breasts does not make the scantiness of their dress so perceptible. The lower garment of the princes is a *dhottī*, or waist-cloth, generally of a striped design, in which a blue colour is prominent. The material of these

<sup>1</sup> *Lapis-lazuli* beads have also been found in the cairns of the Deccan, proving that this stone was in fashion for ornaments from very early times.

<sup>2</sup> *Vishṇudharmottara*, pp. 16-17.

<sup>3</sup> *Ajanta*, i, Plate XXIV. The dark princess is looking not towards her consort but in another direction, showing

a certain modest aloofness when appearing in public.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, iv, Plates XXIII-XXIV.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, Plate XLV.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, i, Plates XIII-XIV; iv, Plates XL-XLI.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, Plate XVII.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, Plates XXIV and XXXIX a.

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*dhotis* was apparently a silken stuff of close texture.<sup>1</sup> The ministers and other high officers are shown dressed in long coats (*angrakhās*) with full sleeves.<sup>2</sup> The material of these coats is something like the *jāmiwār* or *himrū* of Aurangābād at the present day, since it has floral and other attractive designs arranged in slanting bands.<sup>3</sup> The soldiers wore round skull-caps, and jackets or shirts with full, as well as half-sleeves.<sup>4</sup>

Women of this period paid great attention to their coiffure, and at Ajanta a variety of exquisite styles may be studied which are peculiar to the Deccan and South India and have never been seen in Upper India, again showing that the artists of Ajanta were people of the Deccan. The gold ornaments include ear-rings, finger-rings, wristlets, bangles, armlets, necklaces, tiaras, and diadems of a large number of designs, exhibiting perfect workmanship and good taste. The common use of these ornaments suggests that gold was then abundant in the Deccan, which view is confirmed by the existence of gold-mines in certain south-western districts of the Deccan to this day. The export of gold from the ports of Western India is mentioned by early European writers. Pearl ornaments are also to be seen in great abundance at Ajanta, and pearls probably came to the Deccan both from Ceylon and from the Persian Gulf; trade was carried on between the Deccan and these two places even before the Christian era. The fabulous wealth of the Deccan and the fondness of its people for pearls, gold ornaments, and rich silk stuffs may also be judged by a reference to an historical event of medieval times. When Rāmachandra, the rājā of Daulatābād, desired to conclude a treaty of peace with 'Alā-ud-Dīn Khaljī, the latter forced him to pay as ransom for his breach of faith 17,250 pounds of gold, 200 pounds of pearls, 58 pounds of other jewels, 28,250 pounds of silver, and 4,000 pieces of silk.<sup>5</sup>

It is difficult to make any plausible surmise from these paintings regarding polity, more particularly owing to the relative scarcity of ancillary evidence in literary works or contemporary inscriptions in the form of land-grants, &c., although such evidence does exist.<sup>6</sup> The king was apparently the supreme head of the state, but ministers, who are generally delineated as belonging to the Brahman class, were consulted in all diplomatic and domestic affairs, and the will of the people also had considerable influence, since in stories like that of Viśvantara the regard for public opinion is amply shown. In this story the king, at the request of the people, disregarding his own and his consort's grief, exiled his beloved son because of his excessive generosity.<sup>7</sup> Notwithstanding the natural wealth and the various rich industries

<sup>1</sup> *Ajanta*, Plate XXIV.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, Plates X, XVI, XVIII, XXXI, and XXXIV b.

<sup>3</sup> *Jāmiwār* resembles the shawl-work of Kashmir and has its main texture of fine wool, floral and other designs being worked out in silk. In the Ajanta designs figures of ducks and oxen may also be seen (*Ibid.*, Plates XVI and XVIII). *Himrū* is a cheap imitation of the *jāmiwār*, the distinction being that in it the main warp is of fine cotton. Paithan has been noted for its *sāris* of brocade from olden times, and the industry still flourishes there.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, ii, Plate XXXVIII; iii, Plates XXIV-

XXV; and iv, Plates XXVIII, LIX a, and LXI a.

<sup>5</sup> *Cambridge History of India*, iii, 97.

<sup>6</sup> *Vide* Manu's *Dharma Śāstra* and Kauṭilya's *Artha Śāstra*.

<sup>7</sup> The King said:

'Behold the people's will, And I that will do not gainsay,  
But let him bide one happy night before he go away.'

'After the space of this one night, when dawns the  
coming day,  
Together let the people come and banish him away.'

Cowell, *Jātaka*, vi, 255.

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of the country, the general mode of life was plain in the extreme; the kitchen, the pantry, and the dining-chamber of the rājā, shown in the *Sutasoma Jātaka*, do not differ as regards utensils and other requisites from those to be found in the house of an ordinary person (Plate XXXVI *a*). The royal kitchen shown in the above subject was a thatched hut with several pots hung from the bamboos of the roof by means of slings, such as may be seen in the houses of country-folk or poor people today. Below, some pots are shown on a fire over an earthen stove. The pantry is a side-apartment of the royal chamber, and in it several covered dishes and pots are placed on the floor, while the rājā is sitting in the adjoining chamber on a low seat with a plain little table in front of him. Some saucers and cups are scattered on and around this small table. This simple style of dining seems to have been based largely on certain orthodox religious principles regarding abstinence as well as the possible contamination of food. The diet and the style of dining of a prince did not therefore differ much from that of an ordinary person, but the latter would not have enjoyed venison, of which some of the princes delineated on the rock-walls of Ajanta were apparently fond (Plate LXX *a*).

The dwelling-houses of royalty, though richly equipped with tassels and awnings, were small structures with narrow verandas and back rooms. The verandas represented in the paintings generally have slanting roofs resting on beams and rafters. The roofs of the rooms appear to be flat, like those to be seen in some of the rock-hewn shrines.<sup>1</sup> The common people lived in huts with grass roofs supported by props and beams of wood and bamboos. The architectural grandeur which is to be noticed in contemporary religious shrines cannot be traced in the secular buildings represented in paintings, the reason being that the secular ideal of life aimed at simplicity, whilst to glorify God they made His edifices as sublime and magnificent as human imagination and craftsmanship could at that time achieve. This view will be best appreciated if we describe the architectural features of those shrines of which the paintings are studied below in this Part.

We begin with Cave XVII, the plan of which, given in Plate I, explains the general arrangement of the various parts of this *vihāra*. The veranda, while extending to a length of 64 ft., has a breadth of 10 ft. only, and consequently appears somewhat narrow to the art-critic. Similarly, the interspacing of the pillars, which are quite massive in girth, does not indicate a refined sense of proportion. The carving of the pilasters at each end, however, is exquisite, and amply atones for the heaviness of the columns in front. The hall is entered by three doors, one of them being in the middle and the other two on each side of it near the end of the wall. The middle door is of ample proportions and is adorned with elegant carving. There are also two large windows to light the interior of the hall. The latter measures nearly 64 ft. square, and has an apartment in the middle and corridors on all four sides formed by the insertion of columns. There are twenty columns altogether and they have an octagonal design, with the exception of four—two in the middle of the front row and two corresponding to them in the back row—which are square in plan. These are somewhat

<sup>1</sup> The earliest representations of the flat roof with cross-beams and rafters may be seen in the *vihāras* at Kondāne and Pitalkhorā, ranging in date from the second to the first century B.C. *History of the Deccan*, vol. i, Plate II *b*.

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massive, but in the large dimensions of the hall they appear suitable. The columns are adorned with both carvings and paintings, which have been skilfully executed.

At the back of the hall is the shrine, with an antechamber in front. The latter is rectangular in design and measures 17 ft. 9 in. in width and 8 ft. 5 in. in depth. The shrine itself is almost square in plan, its dimensions being 17 ft. 9 in. by 19 ft. 6 in. The door of the shrine is lavishly carved, the frame being divided into facets by sculptured bands representing floral designs, figures of the Buddha in different *mudrās* (attitudes), and figures of the Buddhist female deities of the Mahāyāna school. Two of them, which are carved on the two sides of the sill, apparently represent river-goddesses (*yakshinīs*), as they are shown standing on crocodiles (Plate III *a*). The large image of the Buddha inside the shrine is sufficiently impressive, although it suffers by comparison with the image in Cave I.<sup>1</sup> The Teacher is seated on a richly carved throne, at the back of which are represented the figures of two crocodiles. From the jaws of each of these monsters a man is leaping forth as if to save his life. These men in relation to the size of the crocodiles have been shown on a much smaller scale, but the artistic details of the whole design are admirably finished. The Buddha is shown in the *Dharmachakra mudrā* (teaching attitude). He is seated cross-legged with the soles of his feet turned upwards, and holds the little finger of his left hand with the thumb and forefinger of his right, as if to count the various points of his sermon. Below the throne two deer with a wheel between them are carved, representing conventionally the deer-park of Sārnāth (near Benares) where the Buddha is said to have preached the Law. On each side of the Buddha, standing by the throne, is an attendant holding a fly-whisk. The attendant on the right represents the Bodhisattva Padmapāṇi, who can be identified by the lotus-flower in his left hand; the attendant on the left is the Bodhisattva Vajrapāṇi, whose emblem, the conventional thunderbolt (*vajra*), is clearly visible in the sculpture (Plate III *b*). Near the throne are two more attendants, one holding a cup (the Buddha's alms-bowl?) and the other something else which is not clear, as the sculpture is slightly damaged at that place. The long hair of the two attendants, curled and arranged in the form of a wig, catches the eye. Above, along the halo, may be noticed cherubs who are bringing offerings from heaven to the Buddha.

The religious dignity of the sculpture of this *vihāra* is in keeping with the sense of grandeur conveyed by its architectural style, and derived from the noble expanse of the hall and the elegance and beauty of its other adjuncts. These features, combined with the magnificence of the paintings which adorn the *vihāra*, make it undoubtedly the finest monument of its kind in India, and perhaps in the world. If any other *vihāra* can match it in splendour it is Cave I at the same place; but in this latter *vihāra* the paintings, with few exceptions, are not artistically of such a high order as those in Cave XVII.<sup>2</sup>

On the left side of Cave XVII a passage leads through a rectangular excavation to Cave

<sup>1</sup> *Ajanta*, i, *frontispiece*.

<sup>2</sup> The representations of the Padmapāṇi and Avalokiteśvara on the back wall, on either side of the antechamber, and the figure of the Buddha as a beggar, on the wall of the front corridor, to the left of the door, in Cave I, are indeed

masterpieces of the Buddhist art of India, and for serenity of expression and artistic beauty may stand comparison with any other specimen of this art. *Ajanta*, i, Plates VI *b*, VII *b*, VIII, XXIV-XXVII, and XXXI-XXXIII.

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XIX, which is a *chaitya*. This rectangular excavation, which measures 19 ft. 4 in. in length and 8 ft. 10 in. in depth, was never a separate shrine, although previous archaeologists have marked it as Cave XVIII. The next cave (XIX) is indeed a magnificent temple, and notwithstanding its comparatively small dimensions the carving and the general style of its architecture exhibit perfect workmanship and a highly refined taste.<sup>1</sup> It has an elegant porch which opens on a finely chiselled court some 34 ft. square. The pillars of the porch show a fine sense of proportion in height and girth, and in design they resemble the pillars of Cave II and are equally attractive and well finished. The entire façade of this *vihāra* is adorned with sculptures, representing the figures of the Buddha in different *mudrās*, scenes from his life, floral patterns, jewellery designs, animal-heads, mythical beings, and pairs of lovers. These last are carved at the top—and are shown dallying with one another in horse-shoe shaped windows facing the court. The figures of two corpulent *yakshas*, one of them evidently being Pāñchika, as he holds a purse, are carved as guardians on each side of the springing points of the main arch. The rich crop of the coiled tresses of these two figures falling below their shoulders at once strikes the eye. The figures of the Buddha, carved in niches above the floor of the court, show both serenity of expression and careful workmanship. The row of *hyāna*-heads used as a dividing-line between the bands of sculpture, and the panel of small squares incised in the rock, serving a similar purpose, make the carving of this *chaitya* resemble that of Cave I, where these two artistic motifs are prominent. The pillars of the interior of this cave also have a striking affinity, both in design and workmanship, to the pillars of Cave I, and the virtual identity of these features, combined with the general artistic feeling shown in the decorative work of these two caves, leaves no doubt that they were excavated within a short period of each other. In Part I the date of Cave I has been assigned to the close of the fifth century A.D.,<sup>2</sup> and since the repetition of the figures of the Buddha in the triforium of Cave XIX, as also the style of the paintings in the ceiling of this temple, indicates a later phase of the art of Ajanta, this latter cave may be assigned to the beginning of the sixth century A.D., thus to a date not far removed from that of Cave I.

In verses 26–27 of the inscription incised in Cave XVII there is a reference to the digging of 'a large cistern pleasing to the eyes and filled with fresh . . . and copious water', and also to the construction of 'a grand *Gandhakuṭī*'.<sup>3</sup> Prof. M. M. Mirashi, who has edited the inscription, is of opinion that 'the reference to the *Gandhakuṭī* is undoubtedly to the *chaitya* Cave XIX, which actually lies to the west of Cave XVII'. But Sanskrit poets were always prone to use superlatives when praising a work, and here, as in the case of 'the large cistern pleasing to the eyes', which is only a natural aperture in the rock and does not in any way please the eye, there may have been some exaggeration. So this *Gandhakuṭī* may also have been only an insignificant chapel with an image of the Buddha to the west of Cave XVII, which since its excavation has disappeared owing to a landslide or some other cause. The rock above

<sup>1</sup> The hall of this *chaitya* measures 46 ft. in length, 24 ft. in width, and 24 ft. 4 in. in height. For the plan of the temple see Fergusson and Burgess, *Cave Temples of India*, Plate XXXVII, and also Griffiths, *Paintings*

of Ajanta, ii, Plate 150.

<sup>2</sup> Ajanta, i, 3.  
<sup>3</sup> V. V. Mirashi, *Hyderabad Archaeological Series*, Monograph No. 15, p. 3, footnote 2, and p. 16, footnote 4.

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Cave XVIII has disintegrated badly as the result of climatic influences and shows signs of long continued decay, so that our surmise regarding the disappearance of the *Gandhakufī* is rendered plausible. It has been stated above that the decorative features of the triforium of Cave XIX suggest a date posterior to that of Cave I; thus it may be argued that Cave XVII, which is earlier than Cave I both in its style of painting and in its architecture, cannot be coeval with Cave XIX.

The temple is also important architecturally because it is the first *chaitya* in which all the component parts—the ribs of the barrel-shaped roof, the umbrellas crowning the *dagoba*, and the rafters of the large window—are cut in stone, and there is no trace of any woodwork such as is to be noticed in earlier *chaityas*, IX-X of Ajanta, and those of other places. Another departure from the earlier *chaityas* in this temple is the carving of the figure of the Buddha in a richly ornamented niche cut into the front of the *dagoba*. The Buddha is represented wearing a robe more like a Roman toga than the Indian garment of a mendicant, such as he is shown wearing in the superb painting on the back wall of the antechamber in Cave XVII (Plate XLI). The figures supporting the circular divisions of the triple umbrella, and some of the little dwarfs intertwined with creeper designs,<sup>1</sup> painted in the ceiling of the aisles of this cave, betray the influence of Roman art, but these features are so well adapted to the general decorative scheme of this temple that neither its religious import nor its Indian character suffers from this intrusion of foreign ideas.

The main image of the Buddha carved on the *dagoba* exhibits that inner peace of mind which is the special characteristic of Buddhist sculpture, and in which it differs from contemporary or earlier Roman models. Another sculpture representing a *Nāga* king and queen, carved in a niche near the north-western corner of the court, is equally striking by its calm and repose, although, the stone being porous, some of the features of the figures have been rubbed away (Plate LXXVI<sup>b</sup>). The sculptor's exuberance of spirit and love of rich decoration may further be noticed in the design of the capitals of the pillars of a chapel excavated in the right side of the court of this *chaitya*. The conventional lions' heads (the *kirtimukhas*) in the upper part of the capitals, the fat dwarfs (*ganas*) at the corners in two stages, and the lovely bunches of fruit hanging down from leaves, all combine to present a most graceful pattern.

Passing on from this temple to Caves XX-XXIV, we notice a difference in dimensions and to some extent in plan; but we do not feel these differences so much as we do the builder's keen desire to present new architectural features or fresh patterns for sculptural decoration. In support of this view Cave XX may be taken first. The only change in its plan is that the hall has no columns to support the roof, and further the antechamber advances some 7 ft. into the hall.<sup>2</sup>

But in the decorative scheme of the doorway several new motifs will strike the connoisseur, the most notable being the projection of the long tongues of the conventional crocodiles

<sup>1</sup> Griffiths, J., *Paintings of Ajanta*, vol. ii, Plate 152.

<sup>2</sup> The hall measures 28 ft. 2 in. in width and 25 ft. 4 in. in depth. The height of the ceiling from the floor is 12 ft. 6 in. The roof of the veranda has rafters and cross-beams

cut in the rock similar to those in the roof of the front corridor of Cave XVII. For the plan of Cave XX see Burgess, *Buddhist Cave Temples*, A.S.W.I., Plate XXVIII, Fig. 6.

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(*makaras*) in a curvilinear form with the tips rolled up from each side of the doorway, and forming an ornamental arch above it.<sup>1</sup> The sprouting forth of garlands from the mouths of *makaras* may be noticed in the earlier carving at Amarāvatī, and the sculptors of Ajanta most probably took the idea thence; but it is certainly to their credit that they presented this motif in such a graceful architectural form. The jewellery designs and the floral and leaf patterns carved on the mouldings of this doorway are also very beautiful. The representation of *yakṣinīs* in the form of struts along the capitals of the pillars of the veranda, although not an original motif, has been skilfully achieved.<sup>2</sup>

Cave XXI is also a *vihāra*, but it is much larger in dimensions than Cave XX, the hall alone measuring 51 ft. 6 in. in width, and 51 ft. in depth.<sup>3</sup> The pillars of the veranda are now completely destroyed, but an idea of what their beautiful carving was originally like may be gained from that of the pilasters at each end, which are still intact. The latter resemble in workmanship the pilasters of Cave I. The architect in his effort to produce an idea of richness in the design has added six chapels to the plan of the *vihāra*, two in the veranda, one on each side, two in the side aisles of the hall; and two in the back corridor, one on each side of the antechamber. These chapels have slender pillars of elegant design in front, and neatly carved friezes above them. Chapels of this style may also be seen in Cave II at Ajanta, but the arrangement of six of them in the plan of the building with such pleasing effect is peculiar to this cave.<sup>4</sup> The doorway of the shrine is also richly adorned with sculpture, and the figures of *Nāga* kings are carved on both sides of the entrance as *dvārapālas*. These have been considerably abraded by climatic influences, but the other decorative designs are intact and show consummate skill in their carving (Plate LXXVII *a*). The ceiling and walls of this cave were once painted, and fragments of this work still exist (Plates LXXIV *b* and LXXVII *b*). The artistic merits of these specimens are described in their proper place in this book (*infra*, pp. 108–9).<sup>5</sup>

The next cave (XXII) is a small *vihāra*, comprising an insignificant hall with a narrow veranda in front.<sup>6</sup> The door of the hall, opening on the veranda, is, however, beautifully carved, and pairs of lovers are freely represented on its frame. The figure of a *Nāga* king is shown as a *dvārapāla* on the right jamb of the door. In the interior of the *vihāra* are four cells, all in an incomplete condition. The sculpture of the shrine is of an inferior order, and further there is an excess of the representations of the Buddha, showing poor taste in their arrangement. On the right wall of the shrine, the eight *manushya*, or earth-born, Buddhas,

<sup>1</sup> Burgess, *Buddhist Cave Temples*, A.S.W.I., Plate XXXII, Fig. 1.

<sup>2</sup> The figures of *yakṣinīs* in this form may be seen in the Buddhist temple, Cave I, of Aurangābād, and also in the later Brahmanical temple, Rameśvara (Cave XXI), at Ellora.

<sup>3</sup> For the plan of this *vihāra* see Burgess, *Buddhist Cave Temples*, A.S.W.I., Plate XXIV, Fig. 1.

<sup>4</sup> For the design of these chapels see Burgess and Ferguson, *Cave Temples of India*, Plate XLIX, Figs. 1–2.

<sup>5</sup> Dr. Chakravarti, who has deciphered the painted inscriptions of this cave, observes that the name Daśaratha was intended to suggest to the artist that the *Daśaratha Jātaka* should be painted in the cave, a practice to be noticed in the case of the *Sibi Jātaka*, or the *Viśvantara Jātaka* in Cave XVII (*infra*, p. 111).

<sup>6</sup> The hall is square in plan and measures 16 ft. 6 in. on each side. The height of the ceiling from the floor is 9 ft. only.

PLATES I-III & LXXV-LXXXII

are painted, and the name of each of them is inscribed below his representation. The names of the Bodhi trees, peculiar to these deities, were also originally inscribed, and four of them may still be read. Below these figures of the Buddha there is a dedicatory inscription followed by a verse enumerating the rewards awaiting the donor of an image of the Lord. These inscriptions have been carefully studied by Dr. N. P. Chakravarti (Appendix, *infra*, pp. 111-12).

Cave XXIII is a spacious *vihāra*, its hall being 50 ft. 5 in. wide and 51 ft. 8 in. deep. Twelve massive columns support the roof of the hall, the height of the latter above the floor being 12 ft. 4 in. The veranda has four columns in front, which are all intact and show fine workmanship. There is a chapel at each end of the veranda in the style of Caves II and XXI. The carving of this cave, particularly that of the columns and pilasters, bears a striking resemblance in design and workmanship to that of Cave I, and it is not unlikely that this *vihāra* is not much later in date than Cave I. The antechamber and the shrine of the cave, although begun, have not been finished.

The doorway of the hall is elegantly carved, and the sculptures of the *Nāga* kings, appearing as *dvārapālas*, are most impressive. The figures of the *ganas* and the leaf-pattern on a round moulding also show a fertile imagination and masterly technical skill (Plate LXXVIII a). The representations of the *Nāga* kings as *dvārapālas* in Caves XX-XXIII and the figures of a *Nāga* king and queen in a prominent place in Cave XIX may lead to the conclusion that this group of caves was dedicated by chiefs or wealthy persons who preserved the *Nāga* tradition implied in their ancestry. It has been noted above (p. 3) that Vākāṭaka kings had matrimonial relations with the *Nāga* dynasty of Padmāvatī (Gwalior State), and the former were so proud of this connexion that the name of Bhavanāga of Padmāvatī, the maternal grandfather of the Vākāṭaka king Rudra-sena (c. A.D. 335-60), is mentioned in the genealogy of the dynasty, although the name of a maternal grandfather is not usually included in the genealogy of a ruling king.<sup>1</sup> It must, however, be made clear that this group of caves (XIX-XXIII) cannot be assigned architecturally to an earlier period than the close of the fifth century A.D., and it would be still safer to place it in the first half of the sixth century A.D.

The next cave (XXIV) is designed on an extensive plan,<sup>2</sup> and if completed would have been the largest *vihāra* at Ajanta, as also the most magnificent in the group there, because such of its carvings (over the pillars and the door and windows) as have survived exhibit consummate skill and also a refined taste.<sup>3</sup> The work of excavation was evidently given up for the reason that the lower stratum of the rock had been found to be soft and decayed and unfit for the construction of a temple of a permanent type. The shafts of the columns of the veranda, which were completed, have all been destroyed by time, and only their capitals are to be seen, sticking to the entablature. The carving of the pilasters, which is extremely fine, is reminiscent of the intricate designs of some of the disks of the Amarāvatī Stūpa. Another

<sup>1</sup> Majumdar, R. C., and Altekar, A. S., *New History of the Indian People*, p. 102, footnote 3.

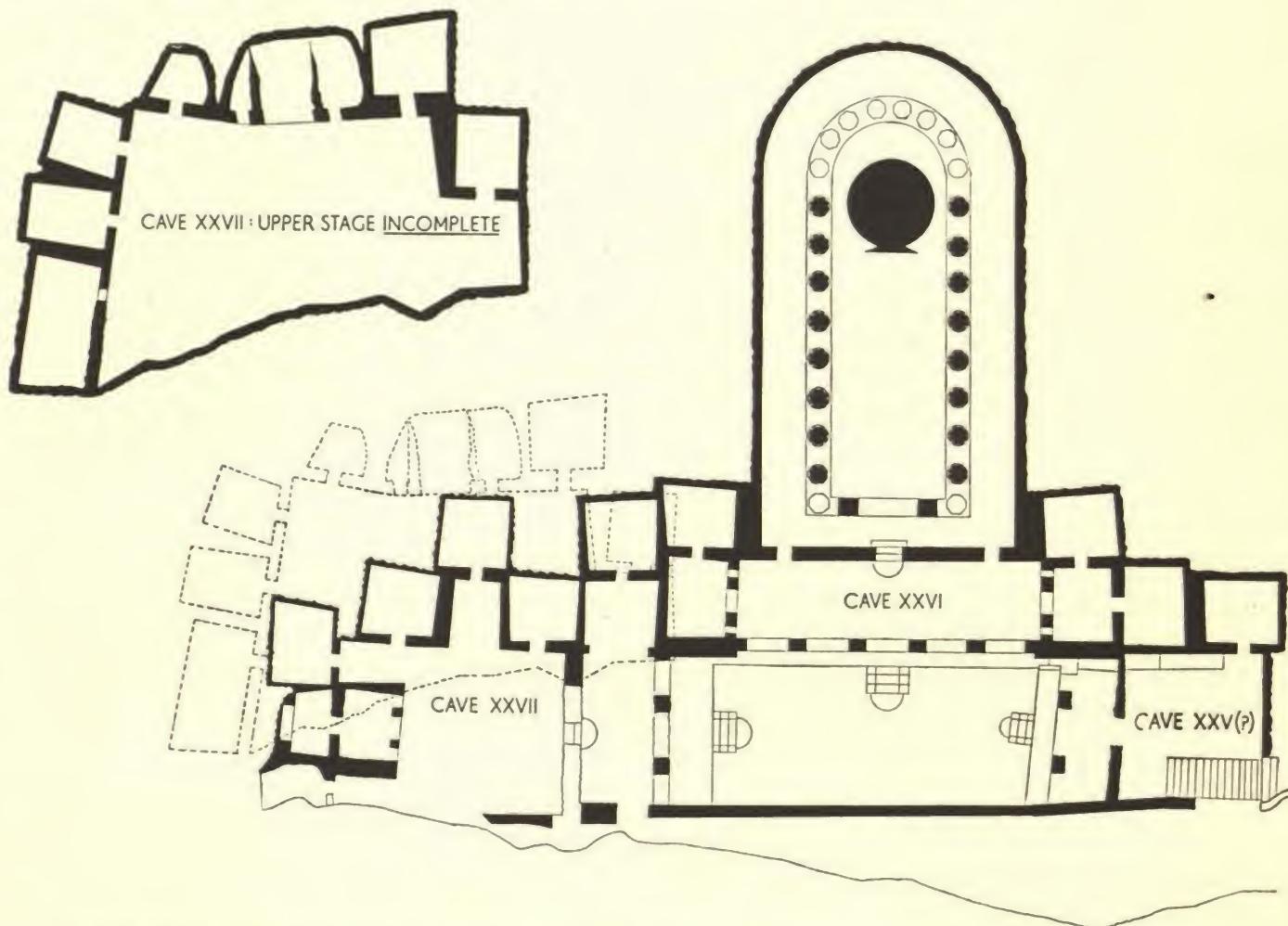
<sup>2</sup> The hall in its present incomplete form measures 73 ft. 3 in. by 75 ft.

<sup>3</sup> Some specimens of the carving of this cave are reproduced in woodcut No. 42, p. 157 of Fergusson and Burgess, *Cave Temples of India*, and in Figs. 17-18, p. 57 of Burgess, *Buddhist Cave Temples*, A.S.W.I.

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motif which is surely borrowed from the sculpture of Amarāvatī is the chain design on the lintel of the main door of this *vihāra* (Plate LXXVIII *b*), in which prostrate human figures are shown as the links of the chain. This motif may be seen in the sculpture representing the Alms-Bowl of the Buddha at Amarāvatī.<sup>1</sup>

The dimensions of the *vihāra* suggest that it was probably begun at the same time as the *chaitya* Cave XXVI to be described below, which, on account of its size, must have needed a monastery of equal magnitude for the accommodation of the *bhikshus*.



Cave XXV, of which a plan is also given by Burgess,<sup>2</sup> is only an adjunct of Cave XXVI, being a chapel with two columns in the front facing the court and three cells in its left side, one of which is incomplete. There is a similar chapel on the left side of the court, shown in the plan given above, which indicates the positions of these two chapels and also the dimensions of the court recently exposed to view by the excavations carried out by the Archaeological Department of Hyderabad.

<sup>1</sup> Yazdani, G., *History of the Deccan*, vol. i, Plate XXIX *a*.

<sup>2</sup> *Buddhist Cave Temples*, A.S.W.I., Plate XXXIV, Fig. 4.

PLATES I-III & LXXV-LXXIX

The entire forefront of Cave XXVI was covered with débris, and that was the reason why Burgess and other archaeologists could not understand the disposition of the various adjuncts of this *chaitya*. The court measures 43 ft. 9 in. by 18 ft. 6 in., and has a flight of four steps leading to a landing in front of the veranda. The roof of the latter has been destroyed with its columns by landslides caused by rains during the monsoons, but the back wall of the veranda, both below the horse-shoe window and above it, is well preserved and shows very rich carving. The upper part of the wall on both sides of the window is divided into panels containing figures of the Buddha of various sizes, represented in different religious attitudes. The multiplication of these figures detracts from the artistic merits of the ornamentation of the façade, and shows a poor taste.

The interior of this temple is also lavishly adorned with carving,<sup>1</sup> and the pillars, the triforium, the walls of the two side aisles, and the drum of the *dagoba* itself present a rich display of decorative designs and mythical figures, among which the sculptures of the Buddha predominate (Plate LXXIX). The pillars resemble those of Cave I, but their carvings are much more elaborate in detail. Art-critics may not admire this excess of adornment, particularly in a place of worship where religious grandeur should not be suggested only by the exuberance of the motifs. Further, the solemn dignity of a house of God requires lofty conception and restraint in artistic expression, and though the architectural sublimity of this temple has suffered considerably from the lavishness of its ornamental features, the colossal sculpture of the Buddha reclining on a couch, carved in the left aisle near the small door, amply maintains the religious feeling of the Buddhist art of this period (*c. A.D. 400-525*). The expression of calm and repose over his face combines with the realism shown in the representation of some parts of the body, notably the right elbow, which is partly covered by a robe of thin material, the folds of which are carefully shown, and by the long tapering fingers and the toes with polished nails (Plate LXXX). The realistic effect is further enhanced by the mournful faces of the *bhikshus*, whose grief at their great loss in the death of the Master, though intense, shows no violent outburst of emotion. The bolster on which the head of the Buddha rests and the feet of the couch on which he is lying also show realistic treatment. Another interesting piece of furniture in the chamber is a tripod holding the water-flagon. Tripods of this design are also represented in the contemporary paintings at Ajanta and in the later sculptures at Ellora, and it appears that they were common at this time (fifth to seventh centuries A.D.) in the Deccan.

In striking contrast to this grand representation of the Buddha is the square and unimpressive figure of him shown in the Temptation-scene carved near by on the same rock-wall (Plate LXXXI *a*). The poses of some of the figures in this ensemble may indeed appear not unpleasing, but the general effect again betrays a lack of restraint in artistic expression and also a crudeness in execution.

The cave has several inscriptions, one of which is incised in the back wall of the veranda, over the doorway on the right side. This inscription records the excavation of the *chaitya*

<sup>1</sup> The interior of the temple is 67 ft. 10 in. deep, separated from the aisles by twenty-six pillars; beside these 36 ft. 3 in. wide, and 31 ft. 3 in. high. The nave is there are two more near the entrance.

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by a *bhikshu*, Buddhabhadra by name. He was an intimate friend of Bhavvirāja, the minister of the king of Aśmaka. The name of the king is not mentioned, but Dr. B. Ch. Chhabra, who has studied this inscription (Appendix, pp. 114–18), is of opinion that 'Ravisāmba's elder brother', who dedicated the *vihāra*-Cave XVII at Ajanta, dedicated this cave (XXVI) as well, or else it was dedicated by Ravisāmba's son, or successor, who was the king of Aśmaka at the time of the excavation of the *chaitya*. As Ravisāmba was a contemporary of the Vākāṭaka king Harisheṇa (c. A.D. 475–500), the date of the excavation of Cave XXVI, even if it be assigned to Ravisāmba's son, cannot be later than the first quarter of the sixth century A.D.

Cave XXVII, although it has an upper story as well, is incomplete, and its cells were found to be choked up with silt brought down by rains from the upper parts of the hill. The court was also at that time filled with débris, but the entire site has now been cleared and the arrangement of the various parts of the *vihāra* can be understood from the plan given on page 16.

The sculpture of this *vihāra* is badly weathered and several columns and some portions of walls are completely destroyed; but those which are intact show careful workmanship (Plates LXXXIb–LXXXII). The *vihāra*, however, is small and could never have been imposing, even if it had been finished according to the plan. As it is attached to the *chaitya*-Cave XXVI, it was probably excavated about the same time as the latter, that is, about the close of the fifth or the beginning of the sixth century A.D.<sup>1</sup>

In the above survey it has been made abundantly clear that no *chaitya* or *vihāra* at Ajanta, on the basis of contemporary incised or painted inscriptions, can be assigned to a period later than the middle of the sixth century A.D., which marks the beginning of the Chālukya supremacy in the Deccan. The views of those scholars who have associated the name of Pulakeśin II with certain paintings at Ajanta have therefore no historical foundation. Similarly the opinions of those pioneers are not worthy of consideration who did not make a comprehensive study of the subject and who have regarded the paintings of Ajanta as examples of the Gupta art. The influence of the Gupta kings did not penetrate politically into the Deccan until the latter part of the fourth century A.D., whereas the art of painting was fairly well developed in the Deccan by the end of the third or the beginning of the fourth century A.D., as is shown by such paintings as the *Shad-danta Jātaka* or the *Syāma Jātaka*, executed on the right wall of the *chaitya*-Cave X. Some paintings in this cave can, on the basis of contemporary inscriptions, be assigned with certainty to a period as early as the second century B.C.

A detailed study of the paintings with a description of the stories delineated therein is given in the following pages, and in presenting it the serial order of the caves has been carefully observed, as was done in the previous parts of the book.

<sup>1</sup> There are two more caves, numbered XXVIII and XXIX by Fergusson and Burgess (*Cave Temples of India*, p. 346, and *Buddhist Cave Temples*, A.S.W.I., p. 59). Both of them are incomplete, and also inaccessible. The Expert Committee under my chairmanship appointed by

the Government of Hyderabad in May 1948 has recommended the construction of steps to approach these caves—see *Report of the Expert Committee for the Maintenance and Preservation of the Ajanta Caves*, pp. 8–9.

## THE BODHISATTVA AVALOKITEŚVARA AND THE BUDDHIST LITANY

### Plate IV a

*The subject is painted on the outer wall of the veranda, near the south-west corner, in Cave XVII.*

THROUGH the percolation of rain-water this painting has become much decayed,<sup>1</sup> yet the figure of Avalokiteśvara can be identified by the flagon which he holds in his left hand. The portrait when complete must have appeared very graceful, as may be judged from the curls of long hair, the outline of the left shoulder and elbow, and the tips of the curved fingers holding the flagon. Some of the 'disasters of life', in which according to Buddhist tradition the help of the Bodhisattva is to be invoked, are delineated on the right side. Among them a man attacked by a cobra is clearly visible; the victim is begging Avalokiteśvara for help. Below, another 'disaster' may be studied where a man is seen in terror of a lion; the figure of the lion is damaged and can be made out only with difficulty. Below this was painted yet another 'disaster', a man attacked by a wild elephant; but this scene is almost defaced now. The Buddhist Litany was a favourite theme both for the sculptor and the painter, and it may be seen carved in the rock in Caves IV and XXVI at Ajanta, in Cave VII at Aurangābād, and in Cave LXVI at Kāphēri.

Above the Litany the painting is still further damaged, but a part of the body of a large serpent may be made out. It has a yellowish red skin and the scales are shown in a conventional manner by tiny flowers. The serpent has a dark streak on its back which extends to its entire length. The reptile is of a huge size and a lion may be noticed which has pounced on it, apparently with a view to destroying the monster. The trunks of some trees and the legs of some men may also be noticed in the original painting, but they are not clear in the reproduction (Plate IV a).<sup>2</sup> Professor Foucher has identified the subject with the story of the wicked serpent as given in the *Bodhisattvāvadāna Kalpalatā*, No. 102, according to which, when the serpent was about to devour an entire caravan of merchants, it was destroyed by the beneficent lion and elephant, whose bravery cost them their lives.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The rock-roof above this subject has been made absolutely watertight by the Archaeological Department of Hyderabad, and there is no danger of further deterioration of this painting through the percolation of rain-water.

<sup>2</sup> Griffiths has given a reproduction of the painting (Plate 57, also see his notes, p. 35), as it was to be seen in his time (1875–85), and has observed, 'This snake may have some connection with the legend (*Sīyakūñjara-Avadāna?*). When famine and disease were prevalent in the country, the Buddha appeared as a great serpent, ex-

tended his dead body all along the void of the valley, and called from the void to those on every side to look. Those who heard were filled with joy, and running together hastened to the spot; and the more they cut the body of the serpent, the more they revived, and were delivered both from famine and disease.' *Vide Beal's Records*, i, 125.

<sup>3</sup> Chavannes Ed., *Cinq cents contes et apollogues extraits du Tripitaka Chinois et traduits en français*, No. 70; and also *Jour. Hyd. Arch. Soc.*, No. 5 (1919–20), p. 76.

## A YAKSHA WITH A FEMALE ATTENDANT

### Plate IV b

*This painting is on the left wall of the veranda, near the south-west corner, Cave XVII.*

THE right half of the painting is completely destroyed, apparently through the effect of moisture resulting from the accumulation of rain-water and silt in the veranda during previous years.<sup>1</sup> A corpulent green figure wearing rich pearl jewellery, such as was affected by princes, is, however, clear. It evidently represents the Yaksha Mañibhadra, whose name frequently occurs in Buddhist literature,<sup>2</sup> and here the name is inscribed in red paint above the figure.<sup>3</sup> The *yaksha* on his left has a female *chaurī*-bearer, whose beautiful head-dress and graceful way of curving her fingers and placing them on her chin in the characteristic Indian style attract the eye. A portion of the head of another figure may be traced to the left of the *chaurī*-bearer. The style of this painting is the same as that of the figures delineated on both sides of the door, on the back wall of the veranda.<sup>4</sup>

Above this subject is a belt of hills, conventionally represented by rectangular bands placed one above the other. Close to these hills an areca-nut tree may be seen, and also a corpse, which is lying stretched on the ground. Higher up amidst crags a hermit clad in a reddish tunic is watching the corpse. Creepers with carefully drawn leaves are shown sprouting from the joints of crags. A brass or earthen waterpot (*lotā*) may also be seen among foliage on the left of the hermit. The place may represent a natural cavern, or a recess in the hillside, which the hermit has selected for contemplation. The subject has not yet been identified.

## THE ROYAL HUNT SCENE: NOT IDENTIFIED

### Plate IV c

*The scene is painted on the left wall of the veranda, to the left of the cell-door above subject IV b in Cave XVII.*

THE scene represents a forest where trees with broad leaves like those of the teak (*Tectona grandis*) which abounds in the hills around the Ajanta monasteries, may be noticed. The people represented in the painting are shown on a march, as if returning from a camp, and either going home or moving to another camp. Beginning from the top left corner, first a grey horse may be noticed and close to it the head of an elephant, which is very dim in the reproduction and of which only by the animal's eyes can be made out. The royal party was apparently riding on the elephant and the horse, but owing to the damaged condition

<sup>1</sup> The drainage of the veranda has been improved since the creation of the Archaeological Department in the State, and there is no danger of the rain-water damaging the paintings of the veranda in future.

<sup>2</sup> *Sathyutta Nikāya*, i, 208, and *Avadānaśataka*, ii, 179.

<sup>3</sup> The inscription is reproduced in *Ajanta*, iii (text volume), Plate IX a.

<sup>4</sup> *Ajanta*, iii, Plates LXVIII-LXXII.

PLATE IV c

of the fresco their figures cannot be made out. In front of the horse, towards the right, two bullocks may be seen, led by a man with a string, which was probably passed through the nostrils of the bullocks in order to keep them under control. Below, near the elephant's head, is a stalwart figure of a greenish complexion, conventionally representing a forest tribesman. The head of the figure is defaced, but the body is intact. In front of the latter is a woman with a child on her hip and a large tray on her head. In the tray she is carrying either a bundle tied with string, or the royal pillow with a trimmed cross-design. The woman is wearing a *sārī* of a striped material. In front of the woman are two soldiers or hunters, one armed with a short curved sword and a rectangular shield, and his companion with a bow and a quiver. They are clad in short *dhotis* (loin-cloths) and have only scarves across their chests to cover the upper part of the body. Both of them are wearing sandals with leather straps round the ankles. The drawing of the legs suggests quick movement. Lower down, again beginning from the left, may be seen an attendant who holds a staff with the representation of a crown at the top. He may be the royal staff-bearer, this guess being made more likely by the dress of the attendant, who is clad in a long white coat and is also wearing a cap. Above his head a square bamboo umbrella may be seen, for protection against the sun. In front of this attendant is a bearded man carrying a pair of baskets hung with strings from a curved bamboo which he holds across his shoulders, immediately behind his neck.

The painting is much damaged, but such figures as are intact show a firm outline and also washes of deep colour to give the impression of figures in the round. The leaves of trees have been painted green, but their edges and texture are cleverly tinted dark or light to add to the artistic effect.

## THE WHEEL OF SAMĀRA (?)

*Plates IV a-VII a*

*The subject is painted on the left wall of the veranda, above the cell-door, in Cave XVII.*

THE figures painted on the outer rim of the Wheel were once identified with the signs of the Zodiac, and for this reason this *vihāra* (Cave XVII) was styled the Zodiac Cave.<sup>1</sup> But as the figures bear no resemblance to the signs of the Zodiac, and as the outer rim of the wheel when complete would have been divided into sixteen compartments<sup>2</sup> and the main circle into eight, the identification has proved to be fallacious. Surgeon-Major Waddell later discovered a similar painting in Tibet, which is alleged to be the copy of an Indian prototype, brought to Tibet in the eighth century A.D.<sup>3</sup> The subject there is styled the Wheel of

<sup>1</sup> Fergusson and Burgess, *Cave Temples of India*, p. 310.

<sup>2</sup> The circle of the Wheel could never have been complete because its lower part is cut by the cell-door. The divisions are arranged by spokes, which measure 3 ft. 5 in. from the centre to the inner border of the rim, the latter

being 4 in. wide. According to Fergusson some figures of the Wheel were removed by Bird. *Ibid.*, footnote 1.

<sup>3</sup> Griffiths, *Paintings of Ajanta*, i, 35, also Waddell, *Lamaism*, pp. 107-9.

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Life, which title may appropriately be applied to the Wheel painted at Ajanta, representing various phases of human life in the universe. The figures delineated in the outer rim may signify the symbols in the Buddhist chain of Causation; for instance, the monkey may be symbolical of the Unconscious Will reaching its next stage of development, with the rise of conscience, or Conscience Experience, as the third link in the evolutionary process.<sup>1</sup>

The figures still intact in the outer rim of the Wheel, beginning from the bottom, left side, are first a kneeling woman with both hands raised in prayer. Her hair is dishevelled and scattered on her shoulders, but the face is calm and shows complete absorption in her devotions (Plate IV c).

A little higher, in the next compartment, are represented two men, sitting on the ground. One of them is of a dark complexion, and his eyes and the position of his left hand below his chin indicate that he is in a pensive mood. He is probably talking to his companion on some 'peril of life'. The painter in order to make the pose of the dark man realistic has drawn his right hand as extended to the ground for support. The artist has also placed high lights on the lips and chin of this figure in order to enhance the expression of consternation indicated by his mournful gaze. The other man is of a lighter complexion, and he holds something in his hands, which may be a weapon.<sup>2</sup>

The next compartment of the outer rim contains a single figure, but as its upper part is destroyed the salient features of the representation cannot be made out. A little higher, in the next compartment, is painted a camel led by his driver, who is walking in front of him. The figures are much damaged, but the camel can easily be recognized by his legs (Plate V). Further, to the right of the camel, was delineated a potter at his wheel, with his ware in front of him, the subject occupying a full compartment. The figure of the potter is now obliterated, but the wheel and the ware can be clearly seen; the group of pottery comprises circular vessels with elongated bases (Plate VI a). A little lower, in the next compartment, is a monkey, the symbolical significance of which has been stated above. The next compartment is occupied by two human figures, one of them having long bushy hair on his head and heavy whiskers, and the other being a young man of a swarthy complexion but of good features, which have been shown to advantage by high lights on the forehead, nose, lips, and chin. These two are engaged in a *tête-à-tête*; the man with bushy hair may be a sage living in the forest, and the young man a seeker after truth who is listening with rapt attention to the words of the other. Further on the right was a mask with two extra eyes in the forehead, symbolizing inner vision.<sup>3</sup> The painting is much obliterated, but the keen eye of a trained artist can make out the two pairs of eyes as well as some other features of the mask (Plate VI b). The other compartments of the rim are now destroyed.

Of the eight divisions of the nave of the wheel, five can be made out, the remaining three

<sup>1</sup> Griffiths, *Paintings of Ajanta*, i, 35, also Waddell, *Lamaism*, pp. 107-9.

<sup>2</sup> Griffiths (*Paintings of Ajanta*, i, 35) has identified it with a sword, but the position of the two figures does not indicate that one of them has thrust a sword into the chest

of the other. They appear to be occupied in conversation rather than in a struggle.

<sup>3</sup> For the symbolical significance of the mask and the extra pair of eyes see Griffiths, *Paintings of Ajanta*, i, 35, and also Waddell, *Lamaism*, pp. 107-9.

PLATES VIV a-II a

were probably never marked, since the wheel could never have been completed owing to the position of the cell-door, as has been suggested above. In describing the incidents painted in the existing five divisions, a beginning, as usual, may be made from the left (Plate IV c). The painting in this division has suffered much both from the hands of the vandal and from the weather, but such fragments as are left throw ample light on the artistic features of the painting as well as on the economic life of the people represented therein. The lower fragment, close to the rim, shows a rich lady (?), accompanied by her child and two attendants, one of them being male and the other female. The lady is wearing a blue silk *choli* (bodice), and she has arranged her hair in a graceful style in the form of a knot placed on one side of her head. The child has stretched out his right hand towards the male attendant, who is of a dark brown complexion. In his left hand the child holds either a lotus-stalk with a bud, or a short stick with metal (gold) top. The stick, or the stalk of lotus, whichever it may be, is of a blue colour. The female attendant is also a rich woman, a maid-in-waiting (?), for the portion of her head which is intact has a pearl string at the parting of the hair. The head of a red bull may also be made out at the back of these figures. The painting above is damaged, but the figures of two bulls are clear in the upper fragment, which shows that the lower scene is connected with the incident delineated above. One of these bulls is painted blue and the other white, but the horns of both are tinted red. The blue colour may conventionally represent the grey colour of the bull; but the horns have evidently been painted red for the purpose of ornamentation.

Higher up, three huts are to be seen which have props and beams of strong timber. The roofs slope on two sides from the apex, and their inner framework is either of strong bamboos or of wood, but the upper part was covered with reeds (*sirkī*), the continuous lines of which may be noticed on the roof of the third hut on the right side. In front of the second hut from the left, a lady with a rich head-dress may be seen; she is placing sticks in the fire-place, over which a pot may also be noticed. The lady is apparently engaged in cooking. Her pose is realistic, and the drawing of the figure graceful. By the side of the fire-place two more pots can be seen, placed one above the other, the upper one covered with a lid. All these pots appear to be of earthenware, showing simplicity of domestic life, as well as observance of religious rules regarding contamination by touch or other causes; for earthenware is cheap enough to be discarded and thrown away after use. Two more earthen pots are seen hung in a sling attached to a beam of the hut. The practice of placing vessels of food in slings suspended from a beam or hook is still in vogue in villages and country towns in India, the object being to avoid contamination and also to save the edibles from the danger of ants and other creeping insects. The two bulls, white and blue, referred to above, are in the court of this hut, and they show that from the beginning cattle have been an essential feature of an Indian household. The head of a man may also be seen between the two bulls: he perhaps represents the cowherd, or a member of the family who attends to the cattle.

Another man with long hair may be noticed, between the second and the third huts: he may be a visitor or a neighbour. In the third hut a man and a woman are shown by themselves. The man is sitting on a cushion, and the expression of his face suggests that he is in

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a happy mood. The figure of the woman is almost destroyed, only a part of her head being visible. To the right of the third hut another hut or apartment may be noticed wherein a young woman with a demure expression is shown distributing food; several vessels are in front of her, two of them being white, the latter arranged one above the other. They may be of metal, and the upper one has a spout in its bowl. A boy with a ruddy complexion and cropped hair is receiving food in a circular red vessel from this young lady. An elderly lady with her husband, or other member of the family, is going away from the place where the food is being distributed. The facial features of this lady, showing the effects of age, have been drawn with consummate skill. The remaining portion of the painting in this division is completely destroyed.

Passing on to the next division, which is comparatively in a better state of preservation, and commencing the description from the bottom, left end, first a *gūlar* (wild fig) tree may be noticed on which a *kinnara* holds a large serpent in his claws. The sight has frightened the men and women in front of the tree. Two among this group are women, as is shown by their *sārīs*; the rest are men, clad in short *dhotīs*. The tree is in full foliage and carefully painted, but the *kinnara*, which according to the myth has a human head, is represented with uncouth features.

Higher up is a group of musicians, one of whom is playing a *dholak* (double drum), hanging by a strap from his shoulders. Another of the party is playing on a flute, and another on a pair of cymbals. The *dholak* has black leather straps across its elongated bowl, and resembles the *dholak* of the present day. In front of the drummer is a man with Dravidian features, looking up to the royal pavilion painted in the upper part of this fresco. Men of such features are painted in several places at Ajanta, and are prominent in two other places in this *vihāra* (Cave XVII), on the wall of the back corridor, and on the right wall of the front corridor.<sup>1</sup> Above the musician playing on a pair of cymbals is a royal attendant wearing large ear-rings, but the upper part of his body has no garment except a striped scarf (*angochhā*) across his chest. Close to the latter are the prince and the princess, with slim bodies and refined features. Their pose also is elegant; the prince's face expresses determination, while the princess appears to be bashful and is looking downwards. The head of an attendant can be made out immediately behind the prince and there is another attendant, probably a lady, close to a pillar of the pavilion in which the prince and princess are shown sitting on a divan. There is a male attendant behind the princess. The right hand of the prince, hanging low with the palm exposed, may suggest the *Bhūsparśa mudrā*, signifying his decision to renounce the world, at which the princess is evidently displeased. The pose of the princess here also is extremely graceful, and the artist has very successfully shown in her gaze the feeling of anger mingled with pain. Lower down, towards the right, is the royal pantry, where a Brahman servant (?) is distributing food to the inmates of the house. There are a number of pots around this servant, and he is serving food with a large spoon from one of them to two young ladies attired in short kirtles (*ghagrīs*) and tight bodices, with their hair beautifully dressed and

<sup>1</sup> These paintings are entitled 'the March of an Army' (Plates XXX and LXVII). They represent local tribesmen of warlike appearance.

PLATES IV *a*-VII *a*

bedecked with flowers. Above the pantry the royal kitchen may also be seen, where a cook is stirring the contents of a pot with a ladle. Several other pots are shown on the fire-place, but the arrangement is simple and even primitive. The cook is shown sitting on the ground with both his legs doubled up.

Below the pantry, towards the left, was apparently the courtyard of the royal palace, because three guards, who are armed with swords, and also the back of an elephant, may be noticed. The elephant has a *mahāvat* (driver) on his neck, and another attendant (*charkatā*) sits on the haunches of the animal. Below, the painting has decayed completely, but near the lower spoke of the division two buildings may be made out, one of which, on the right, is a pillared room. A little higher than this room, towards the right, the forelegs of one or two horses may be seen, but their bodies have completely perished. The horses are shown in a stable, or in a place surrounded by a painted belt. Further, on the right, near the spoke, is a tree with rich foliage, and close to the latter the head of a man with long hair may also be made out. Behind this man, a little higher, may be seen a large circular dish, and another one square or rectangular, on which a large pineapple is placed. The scene perhaps represents the royal garden retreat.

At the top of this division a white *stūpa* is painted, and the artist by way of contrast has placed in front of it a grove of dark green trees with luxuriant foliage. A lady is praying before the *stūpa*.

The incidents represented in the third division of the Wheel show the palace-life of princes, and depict scenes of revelry and pleasure-seeking. Beginning from the left side, a long pillared hall may be noticed, in the front portion of which a prince, perhaps the same as the one pictured in the second division of the Wheel, is shown sitting on a cushion. He is attended by two female *chaurī*-bearers on his right and left. The figure of the attendant on the left is somewhat blurred in the reproduction (Plate VI *a*), but the attendant on the right is clear, and her pose and features are graceful. Outside this hall towards the left is the princess (?), probably coming to the hall where the prince is sitting. The painting of the princess is somewhat damaged, yet the pose and the treatment of the various parts of her body exhibit rich imagination and perfect technical skill. A portion of the head of another figure may be made out near the outer pillar of this hall, on the left side. The painting below is completely destroyed, and there is a big gap.

The scene to the right of the pillared hall apparently lies in a garden, because a cluster of trees, some of which are laden with fruit, is painted in the background. Below these trees may be seen three princes, all wearing crowns. They are sitting on cushions and have in their lap or by their side in a close embrace young girls clad in tight-fitting garments. One girl has thrown her arms lovingly round the neck of the prince depicted on the right side, near the spoke.<sup>1</sup> Below, a dance is going on accompanied by music. The dancer has a slim figure and is dressed in a light blue striped *sārī* and a blouse with half-sleeves. Her pose indicates that she is about to go into a whirling movement. Among the musicians two are playing on

<sup>1</sup> The original red outline indicating the nose and the eyebrows of a prince in this group may be of interest to a student of art.

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flutes, two on cymbals, one is playing on a *dholak*, and another on a pair of *tablās* (drums). Some of these artistes have very fair complexions and their features also are very good, particularly those of the dancer and of the musician sitting on the ground and looking to her left. The dancer has *ghungrūs* (brass-bells) round her ankles, which shows that the practice of wearing these ornaments extends back to the time of this fresco (fifth century A.D.).

Below the dance-scene is a belt of hills, represented conventionally, and beyond them again a merry couple, a prince offering a cup of wine to his mistress, who is sitting on his knee with her arms around him. To the left of this couple is a scene representing the royal prince in a calm, contemplative mood, evidently disgusted by the life of revelry seen in the upper part of the fresco. He has made a loop with the fingers of his right hand suggesting the dilemma with which he is faced and which he is anxious to solve in the spirit of a seeker after truth. The incidents painted here resemble some of the episodes of the *Mahājanaka Jātaka* painted on the left wall of Cave I.<sup>1</sup>

There are two maids of fair complexion standing behind the prince and holding fly-whisks in their hands. There are three more attendants who are sitting in front, and listening with attention to the words of the prince. Two of these attendants are dwarfs, always a conspicuous feature at the courts of Indian princes.

In the fourth division of the Wheel the painting has suffered much more than in other divisions, and probably the destruction is due to Bird's irresponsible act in cutting off figures from the rock-wall, to which a reference has already been made (*ante*, p. 21, footnote 2). This division either contained scenes of country life, such as are shown in the first division, or represented episodes in the exile of a prince living a life of penance in a forest, thus continuing the story painted in the second and third divisions. Of the two fragments which have survived, the upper one, below the rim, represents a bullock-cart with a thatched top with sloping sides (Plates VI *a* and VII *a*). Inside the cart a large number of bundles may be seen, evidently the belongings of the person who is travelling in it. Upon the top of the cart a monkey has jumped from the adjacent teak, or banyan, tree, which is shown in the background. To the right of this tree is another with long leaves, probably a mango, on which a pair of birds with long tail-feathers are sitting. The birds may be pea-fowl, which are common in the Ajanta valley, and their gorgeous feathers must have attracted the notice of the artists, who have painted them in several places in the frescoes there. The effect of light and shade on the leaves of these two trees is skilfully shown. The wheel of the cart, in the style of its construction and the shape of its spokes, resembles the wheels of the country carts of India today. In front of the cart the figure of a lady of fair complexion may be noticed, who may have joined her royal consort in his life of exile, or may only have accompanied him up to a certain stage.

In the lower fragment, the figures of three bulls—red, blue, and white—can be made out (Plate VI *a*). They may be the same as those represented in the first division of the Wheel (Plates IV *c* and V). The heads of two men are also visible, and these may represent the cowherds or the people attending to the cattle.

<sup>1</sup> *Ajanta*, Part I, Plates XII–XIII. For the story see *Jātaka*, vi, 30–31.

#### PLATES IV *a*-VII *a*

The fresco in the next division (the fifth) is completely destroyed except for a small fragment in which a prince is shown in the act of meditation under a mango tree (?). Owing to the damaged condition of the painting it will not be safe to attempt any identification of the story painted in the various divisions of the Wheel, but some of the episodes, as was observed above, unmistakably resemble those of the *Mahājanaka Jātaka*. The fresco seems to have been executed by the same artists who painted the groups of *apsarasas* on the back wall, because the colour-schemes, the human emotion combined with religious sentiment, and the artistic detail, are almost identical in both these groups of paintings.

The Wheel is represented as being held by a mythical being of colossal size, whose giant arms are visible above the rim. The arms are conventionally painted green, but the skill of the painter may be admired in the treatment of the fingers with long trim and polished nails, which have been finished with great care (Plates IV *c* and VI *b*).

On the right side of the Wheel some religious story was painted, the upper part of which is obliterated now by the smoke of the fire kindled indiscriminately by the hermits, as well as by the bats which cling to the walls in large numbers, particularly in corners, and have permanently disfigured the paintings with their excretions. The foliage of some trees and the jewellery worn by some figures can be made out, but the figures are too dim to be identified in a definite manner (Plate VII *a*). Lower down, the fresco is in a better state of preservation, and a hermit may be seen teaching the Buddhist Law to a prince who is sitting on a cushion in front of him (Plate VI *b*). The hermit is sitting either on a wooden seat or on a stone slab of rectangular shape, and by his side is his water-flagon, placed in a rough wooden frame. The water-flagon is also the emblem of the Bodhisattvas Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara (Plates IV *a* and VI *b*). Above the hermit there was another figure, the drawing of one of whose legs suggests rapid movement. Behind this figure was also painted a tree with long leaves.

#### THE MOTHER AND CHILD BEFORE THE BUDDHA AND OTHER BUDDHIST DEITIES

##### Plate VII *b-c*

*These figures are painted on the side walls of the second window, to the right of the main entrance, in the veranda of Cave XVII.*

THESE paintings until quite recently were concealed under a pall of smoke and dirt, but although the colours of the paintings are almost destroyed, the figures can be made out by the outlines of their drawings. On the left wall of the window the figure of the Buddha can easily be identified by his robe and the begging-bowl which he holds in his right hand (Plate VII *b*). In front of him is the figure of a woman with a child, who is looking at the Buddha with astonishment. The woman has been identified as Yaśodharā and the child as

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Rāhula, the wife and son of the Buddha. The painting refers to the visit of the Buddha to Kapilavastu after his 'enlightenment', when Yaśodharā led Rāhula to his father in the womanly hope that he would bring his father back to her.<sup>1</sup> The figures of the mother and child are not clear in the reproduction, but they can easily be made out in the original painting.

The subject on the opposite wall included the representation of the Buddha in the oval, and on the right the figures of a young hermit and a lady. As a large portion of the fresco is destroyed, the figures of the hermit and the accompanying lady are not entire, but such portions as are intact show graceful features and careful modelling of the different parts of their bodies. Their poses are also artistic: the hermit has inclined his head towards the lady, while she has curved her arm and placed the fingers of her hand on her chin as if to listen with attention to what the young hermit is saying to her. The material of the lady's *sārī* is a silk fabric of attractive design. These two figures may represent Prince Siddhārtha and Yaśodharā, immediately after he had donned the robe of a mendicant, and thus the painting may be connected with the one painted on the right wall of the window (Plate VII a).<sup>2</sup>

#### THE BUDDHA PREACHING TO THE CONGREGATION FIRST SERMON OR THE GREAT MIRACLE (?)

Plate VIII a-b

*The subject is painted on the right wall of the veranda, above the cell-door.*

THE subject, the Buddha preaching to the Congregation, based on the First Sermon, or the Great Miracle, mentioned in the legend, must have assumed popular versions according to the fancies of the traditionalists of later times, and it was in view of such considerations that Foucher identified this subject, as well as the scene painted on the back corridor of Cave XVI, with the Great Assembly (*Mahāsamaya-sūtra*), which is also represented in the bas-reliefs of Bharhut.<sup>3</sup> The subject is here represented in a highly conventional form, the Buddha being shown sitting on a richly carved chair, with his hands held together in the

<sup>1</sup> The subject is painted on a grand scale in the antechamber, left of the shrine-door, in this *vihāra* (Plates XI b and XL). It is also to be noticed in the bas-reliefs of Amarāvati. Foucher is inclined to identify the subject with the 'offering of a handful of dust', made to the Blessed One by the child who afterwards became Aśoka. *Jour. Hyd. Arch. Soc.*, Part V (1919-20), pp. 86-87.

<sup>2</sup> In the process of cleaning carried out recently, some figures have been revealed on the side walls of the first window as well. They are not reproduced in the Plates accompanying this Part (IV), but they may be described here. On the right side is the representation of the Buddha with a youngish face. A *gandharva* may be noticed flying

in an opposite direction, but looking back towards the Buddha, one of his eyes being wide open and the other partly closed, showing a squint. The drawing of the hand and other limbs of the *gandharva* is excellent. In front of the Buddha is a prince listening to the sermon of the Great Being with attention, as is shown conventionally by the loop which he has made with the fingers of his left hand. Lower down, the figure of a princess may be noticed, who has joined her hands to show respect to the Buddha. The drawing of this figure also is very good, and an expression of devotion is apparent in her gaze.

<sup>3</sup> *Ajanta*, iii, 60, Plate LVIII, also *Jour. Hyd. Arch. Soc.*, No. 5, 1919-20, pp. 88-89.

PLATE VIII *a-b*

*Dharmachakra mudrā* (the teaching attitude), and surrounded by votaries, including princes, *devas* (?), *arhats*, and *gandharvas*. The artist has given full play to his imagination in the designs of the crowns worn by the princes represented on the left side of the Buddha. There are as many as twenty-one princes, and the crown and jewels of each differ according to his rank; but they are all very artistic in shape and finish. Among the jewels of these princes pearl ornaments are in abundance, but pendants of emerald and jewellery set with other precious stones, notably sapphires, may also be noticed. The artist, with a view to showing that these princes hail from different parts of the country, has given them varying complexions, dark brown, dark grey (clayey), and greenish, the last being conventional, representing chieftains of the forest tribes.

The votaries on the right side comprise eight more princes, or *devas*. Their bright eyes and fixed gaze at the Buddha show their devotion to the Great Being. They are also wearing crowns and rich jewellery, in which rubies (red stones) are prominent. Some of the crowns have a conical design. Behind these princes or *devas* there are belts of conventional hills, above which seven *arhats* may be seen flying towards the Buddha. Their hair is plaited and arranged in the *jaṭā* style (Plate VIII *b*). Their stern features indicate that they had led a life of renunciation in their previous existence, and they are all clad in short *dhotis* with red stripes. On the corresponding side, to the left of the Buddha, is a group of *gandharvas*, but owing to the deterioration of the painting their figures cannot be made out in the reproduction.

The most artistic feature of this painting is a pair of pea-fowl sitting on a ledge, to the left of the flying figures of the *arhats*. The poses of these birds show not only close animal-study, but a highly refined taste in the graceful undulating lines of their necks, bodies, and plumage. One bird has slightly turned its neck, and is looking up at the *arhats* flying in the air. Its wings are inclined to a different plane from its body, while the tail-feathers spread towards the ground in yet another direction. The line of axis thus moves from plane to plane (VIII *b*). The representation of the other bird is equally attractive. It has turned its neck towards the Buddha, as if in an attitude of meek reverence, and has placed its beak on the lower jaw of the crocodile carved at the back of the Buddha's chair, on the right side. Both conception and execution exhibit art of the highest order, such as perhaps was never subsequently attained in India.

## FLORAL DESIGNS AND OTHER DECORATIVE MOTIFS

### Plate IX a-b

*These designs are executed in the ceiling of the veranda, in Cave XVII.*

THE entire ceiling of the veranda is divided into panels containing creeper and floral designs of great variety. The artist in his love of rich patterns has not only delineated flowers in different stages of bloom, but has also added ornamental features to the stems and leaves of the creepers bearing these flowers (Plate IX a-b). He has further introduced aquatic birds and diminutive human figures to make the patterns fanciful and pleasing to the eye. For instance, notice the graceful representation of the duck in the second panel from the left of the middle row in Plate IX a. Similarly, note the design in the middle of two brackets (Plate IX b), in which two small boys are holding a pair of ducks. The drawing of the birds and the delineation of the tassels of the boys' caps, the ends of their scarves, and the fringes of their loin-cloths not only give a picturesque effect to the design, but also add to its liveliness. The drawing of the lotus-vine on the architrave, in front of the door, is also very attractive (Plate IX b).

Among the colours used in painting these designs, green and yellow with white and black have been freely used; blue is rare, although this colour is common in other paintings of the period (fifth century).

## THE *SHAD-DANTA (CHHADANTA) JĀTAKA*, OR THE STORY OF THE SIX-TUSKED ELEPHANT

### Plates X, XI a, and XII a-b

*The Jātaka is painted on the outer wall of the front corridor, inside Cave XVII, to the left of the main entrance.*

THIS story is also painted with much vigour and grace on the wall of the right corridor of Cave X, and is described in considerable detail in Part III of this book.<sup>1</sup> Here, although a large portion of the fresco has peeled off and the upper part of it has been obliterated by the droppings of bats, the artistic progress made in the course of a couple of centuries, since the previous painting was executed, is apparent from the subtle charm of the designs, the perfection of form, and the exquisite style of delineation to be noticed in the surviving fragments of the fresco. The story is presented in four episodes: (i) the bedroom scene in which the rānī plans her revenge; (ii) the lotus-lake in which the *Shad-danta* elephant is bathing and enjoying himself with his herd; (iii) the hunters, who have been sent

<sup>1</sup> *Ajanta*, iii, 33-37, Plates XXX-XXXIV; also *Jātaka*, v, 20-31.

PLATES X, XI a & XII a-b

by the rānī, see the Six-tusked Elephant resting under a tree, close to a range of hills, and wound him with an arrow; (iv) the hunters bring the tusks of the *Shad-danta* elephant to the royal court, and the rānī faints on seeing them.

To begin with the first episode, which is painted at the top left-side corner, a rānī is seen reclining on a couch placed in a pillared room. The openings of this room are richly hung with festoons. Griffiths writes that the rānī is reclining on the rājā, sitting behind him on the couch;<sup>1</sup> but as the painting has been blackened by the indiscriminate use of copal varnish by Griffiths' party, who laid it on the fresco to brighten its detail without removing the layer of smoke and dirt which had gathered on it, the figure of the rājā is no longer visible in the painting, and other figures are also very indistinct. A maid with a plump face may, however, be noticed, who is looking at the rānī with anxiety. Two kneeling figures may also be remarked, who are probably hunters and are receiving instructions from the rānī regarding the abode of the Six-tusked Elephant. At the right end of the room is a male servant, who, to show respect, has crossed his arms on his chest. He is dressed in a white shirt, the sides of which are slit, and the attendant's *dhotī* is visible from below the shirt. There is a white vessel with a conical lid, and close by a casket placed on a stand in the room. The scene represents the *Jātaka* episode in which Subhaddā feigns illness and tells her husband that until the tusks of the king elephant whom she had seen in a dream are brought to her she will not recover. The rājā has sent for the hunters, and Subhaddā is telling them where to find the Six-tusked Elephant.<sup>2</sup>

The second incident of the story, depicting the natural beauty of the lake in which the Six-tusked Elephant bathed with his herd, is shown in the lower part of the fresco. A large portion of the painting has been destroyed, yet the charm of the white lotus-flowers springing from the banks of the lake, the elephants of the herd plucking flowers in order to decorate their lord, the Six-tusked Elephant, the pairs of white ducks in mirthful mood, the belts of hills and over them the denizens of the forest, the wolves, the apes, and also the tribesmen of the jungle, and behind them lovely trees in blossom, and also ferns and creepers with leaves of exquisite shape and delicacy sprouting from the joints of the hillside—all present a panorama richer in detail and more vivid in effect than can be visualized from the text of the *Jātaka* alone.<sup>3</sup> To show the benevolent and gentle nature of the Six-tusked Elephant, the painter has placed one of the pair of wolves on the rump of the benign animal, who is not annoyed by the temerity of the beast. The incident is being watched from above the hill by a human pair, representing the tribesmen of the forest. The male figure holds a bow and a sheaf of arrows,<sup>4</sup> and has a dagger in his belt; the woman has an ornament round her arms and three strings of beads round her waist. The lower part of her body is scantily covered with leaves. The figures of the wolves, although dim in the reproduction, are very realistic and clear in the original painting. Still more realistic and graceful in form is the representation of the monkeys (*langūrs*), sitting on a ledge, to the right of the human pair. Above, the

<sup>1</sup> *Paintings of Ajanta*, i, 36–37, Plate LXIII.

<sup>2</sup> *Ajanta*, iii, 32, and *Jātaka*, v, 24–25.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 20–21.

<sup>4</sup> The aboriginal tribes dwelling in the forests of Central India still have bows and arrows as their chief weapons for defence and hunt. They are excellent marksmen.

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beauty of the *palāśa* tree (*Butea frondosa*) may be admired; it has burst into blossom, and the scarlet tint of its flowers contrasts attractively with the dark green of the calyx. As lac-insects feed on this tree, the artist has been so faithful in his representation that he has painted a row of black insects climbing up its trunk. No less remarkable is the skill of the painter in delineating another tree, which is shown growing to the left of the *palāśa* tree. The lilies, ferns, and thickets referred to in the legend are all represented in the fresco, and show the artist's delight in natural beauty. As an example of his refined taste may be noted the creeper to the right of the *palāśa* tree near the end of the fresco.

The upper part of the fresco, in which the third episode is painted, has become quite black now, and the rich foliage and the vast magnitude of the stately banyan tree which was the favourite resort of the Six-tusked Elephant can no longer be admired.<sup>1</sup> The keen eye of an artist may, however, discover the figure of the hunter Sonuttara, who has stretched his bow to its utmost capacity and is shooting an arrow at the lordly elephant (Plate X). Lower down a white elephant of colossal size is represented,<sup>2</sup> who has apparently been wounded by the arrow shot by the hunter. The benign animal has discerned the evil motive of the hunter in wounding him, and though he is in great agony on account of the pain caused by the arrow, he is pulling out his tusks with his own trunk in order to present them to the hunter. The latter is struck with remorse at his cruel act, and to beg forgiveness of the animal has prostrated himself before him (Plate X).

The Six-tusked Elephant in this scene is accompanied by a large number of elephants, who form his herd. One of these animals is quite young; he is of a white colour. To the left of the hunter who has prostrated himself, two of his companions are carrying the tusks of the benevolent elephant in slings, suspended from bamboos which the hunters have placed across their shoulders. On the right side, above the belts of hills, a hermit with a begging-bowl in his hand is shown seated—he may be the Buddha, because in front of him is the white elephant (the Bodhisattva), who has raised his trunk as if to salute the Great Being. The subject evidently refers to the appearance of the benign elephant before the Buddha in heaven, after his death caused by hunters in this world. The incident is not mentioned in the *Jātaka* and appears to be a later addition to the story.

The fourth episode is the court-scene in which the rāṇī faints at the sight of the tusks of the benevolent elephant, who was her husband in his previous birth. She is shown stretched on a couch, supported from behind by the rājā. Two round pillows with circular designs at their ends may be seen at the head of the couch, behind the rājā. The couch has short carved feet of a plain type, but its frame has a creeper design. There are several maids in attendance: one of them is rubbing the soles of her mistress's feet, another is preparing sandal-paste, another is fanning, another is using the *chaurī* (whisk), and another holds the hand of the rāṇī in hers, and is speaking words to revive her. There are also three male attendants, two of whom have long sticks in their hands. The features of the maid who holds the rāṇī's hand,

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, v, 24.

<sup>2</sup> 'Once the Bodhisattva came to life as the son of the chief elephant. He was pure white, with red feet and

face. By and by, when grown up, he was eighty-eight cubits high and one hundred and twenty cubits long.' *Ibid.*, 20.

PLATES X, XI *a* & XII *a-b*

and of the male servant in the middle, are contorted with grief. The hunter is shown with the tusks placed on a large platter. As the colours of the painting have faded considerably and the outline is also dim, it is not possible to study fully the artistic detail. The ensemble of the figures, however, clearly conveys *pathos*.

THE MAHĀKAPI JĀTAKA

Plates XI *b*, XII *c-e*, and XIII *a-b*

*This story is painted on the wall of the front corridor, over the window and the small door, to the left of the main entrance, Cave XVII.*

TWO episodes of the *Jātaka* are shown in the painting.<sup>1</sup> The first represents the arrival of the rājā of Benares at the bank of the river Ganges, where grew a mango-tree which bore delicious fruit. The rājā noticed there the depredations which were being made by a herd of monkeys and ordered his archers to shoot them. The King Monkey, to save the life of his herd, stretched himself in the form of a bridge across the river, and let the herd tread on his body and pass over to a tree growing on the other side. Being exhausted by the strain, the King Monkey fell down from the top of the tree, but was caught in a blanket spread

<sup>1</sup> A summary of the entire story, as recorded in the *Jātaka*, iii, 225-7, is given below:

Once the Bodhisattva was born as a Great Monkey. He lived in the Himālaya and had a retinue of eighty thousand monkeys. Near the bank of the Ganges there was a large mango tree, the fruit of which was sweet and had a pleasant flavour. The Great Monkey and his retinue ate the mangoes of the tree with relish; but the leader thought of danger if any fruit should fall into the water of the Ganges and be carried away and eaten by others. The Great Monkey therefore ordered his retinue to eat up the mangoes of the tree lest any one should fall into the river. But notwithstanding this precaution one large ripe fruit fell into the waters of the Ganges and was accidentally caught in the net of a fisherman. He noticed the mango and having never seen it before brought it to the rājā of Benares. The rājā ate the mango, and being pleased with its taste and flavour he sent for his foresters and enquired about the tree which bore such fruit. They told him that the tree which bore this fruit grew on the bank of the river Ganges in the Himālaya. The rājā sailed up the river with his retinue, and when he approached the tree he halted for rest there. At midnight he noticed a large herd of monkeys eating the mangoes, and being annoyed by their depredations he ordered his archers to shoot them. The monkeys were frightened by the order of the king,

but the Bodhisattva comforted them and said: "Do not fear, I will give you life." Afterwards he measured the distance between the mango tree and another tree growing on the other side of the river, and subsequently cut a bamboo shoot of equal length to serve as a bridge for the escape of the monkeys. The bamboo shoot somehow fell short of the length required to form the complete bridge, but the Bodhisattva made good the deficiency by stretching himself at the end, so that his retinue could pass safely over on his back. The herd thus escaped, but Devadatta, who was then a monkey and among that herd, jumped with all his might on the back of the Bodhisattva and injured him fatally. The rājā noticed the incident and determined to save the life of the Great Monkey. He therefore ordered his attendants to dress the wounds of the Bodhisattva and to adopt other measures so that he might recover. Touched by the solicitude and devotion of the rājā, the Bodhisattva instructed him how to rule and also taught him the Doctrine. Afterwards the Great Monkey died, and the rājā gave orders that his obsequies should be performed in royal style.'

This story is also figured in Cunningham's *Stūpa of Bharhut*, Pl. XXXIII, Fig. 4. Cf. *Proc. As. Soc. of Bengal* for August 1891; *Jātaka Mālā*, No. 27, and Chavannes, *Cinq cents contes et apollogues extraits du Tripitaka Chinois et traduits en français*, No. 56.

#### AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

below at the instance of the rājā, who had noticed the King Monkey's benevolent act in risking his life to save his followers. The second episode represents the King Monkey teaching the Doctrine to the rājā of Benares, because he was touched by the solicitude shown by the rājā for his protection.

At Ajanta the second episode, i.e. the teaching of the Doctrine by the King Monkey, is delineated first, apparently for considerations of space, but in describing the incidents of the story it would be best to take them in their proper sequence regardless of the order in which they are painted. Thus, commencing with the figures of the first episode, the rājā of Benares is prominent, as he is riding on a spirited horse, and also has an umbrella, the emblem of royalty, over his head. The head and neck of the horse are skilfully drawn and the harness is complete except for the stirrups, which cannot be seen at Ajanta. The rājā is escorted by a large number of soldiers who are armed with swords, spears, daggers, and bows and arrows. Three of them are shooting arrows at the monkeys who are to be seen amidst the leaves and branches of a large banyan-tree. The artist here has changed the mango-tree of the *Jātaka* into a banyan, which is more stately in appearance and more picturesque in the eyes of the painter because of its rich foliage, clusters of shoots, and colourful fruit. Over the leaves of the banyan-tree may be seen the Great Monkey, who has stretched his body lengthwise, and several monkeys of the herd are going in the opposite direction, treading on his body. One monkey (Devadatta ?) is on the back of the Great Monkey and has either jumped mischievously upon him or has injured him in some other way, as a result of which the Great Monkey has fallen but is being caught in a blanket. The four corners of the blanket are in the hands of the rājā's guards, who according to the *Jātaka* were ordered by the rājā to protect the monkey from injury (Plates XII *d* and XIII *a*).

The river Ganges is represented in a conventional manner, first by the presence of fishes and aquatic birds in its upper and lower courses, and secondly by persons both male and female bathing in the river. The painter has shown only the upper parts of the bodies of these bathers, the lower parts being immersed in water. There are eight persons, two of whom are male and six female. There is also a boy sitting on the bank, which is drawn in a conventional style with wavy lines. One youngish lady with a sweet face is making the *pranāma* (obeisance) to the rājā (Plate XIII *d*). Another lady behind the young one is looking in another direction, the object of the painter being to show the artistic effect of different poses. Lower down, in the second row, a lady is clinging to the back of her husband (?), who has stretched out his hand for support, or for some other purpose, towards the lady in the upper row. In the third row (the lowest) there is a lady with a handsome rounded face; she is talking in a loving manner to her paramour or husband, who is next to her in the painting. Another lady who is behind the male figure is listening to the conversation of this couple (Plate XIII *d*).

At the bottom, on the left bank of the river, another couple is shown, engaged in talk. The gesture of the fingers of the male figure suggests that he is explaining something to his interested companion. The poses of these two figures are extremely graceful. The colours of the fresco, owing to blackening from various causes, have disappeared, but the outline, which can still be made out, shows both good taste and neat workmanship.

PLATES XI *b*, XII *c-e* & XIII *a-b*

The fresco where the second episode is painted may appear almost black at first sight, but with a little patience and careful study the main figures of the story may be discerned. On the left side the Great Monkey is sitting on a ledge and teaching the Doctrine to the rājā, as is indicated by the gesture of the Great Monkey's fingers. The hand of the latter is represented more or less in the *Dharmachakra* attitude. The rājā, who is squatting on the ground in front of the Great Monkey, is following the sermon point by point. Behind the rājā two guards of his escort are also listening to the sermon with attention. Close to the rājā, towards the right side, the royal groom is sitting; he holds the horse by the reins. The head of the horse may be seen between the rājā and the groom. It has been painted very realistically, and the eyes and expression of the face indicate that the horse also is listening to the preaching of the Great Monkey. Further to the right, near the end of the fresco, is the banyan-tree, on which two monkeys are shown sitting, their long tails hanging down.

The painting is of great interest from the religious point of view, since it shows that according to the teaching of the Buddha, as preserved in the *Jātaka* stories, men, animals, even reptiles, possess alike a sense of moral and spiritual values, and are bound together as different aspects of life in the universe.

THE *HASTI JĀTAKA*, OR THE STORY OF THE  
BENEVOLENT ELEPHANT

*Plate XIV a-b*

*The story is painted on the wall of the front corridor, above the small door, left of the main entrance, in Cave XVII.*

THE original painting is very indistinct, and it is only as a result of recent cleaning operations that several figures have been made out and the *Jātaka* identified.<sup>1</sup> At the top of the conventionally represented hills, the figure of the Benevolent Elephant can just be traced, who, according to the *Jātaka*, throws himself down the precipice to save the lives of a party of merchants who had lost their way in the forest and were afflicted with hunger—a considerable number of them had already perished. Below the hills the carcass of an elephant may be noticed, and also towards the left side of the painting the figures of two men (merchants) who are carrying trays with roast-balls fixed to sticks placed thereon. Lower down there are six men who are shown eating the roast-balls—three of these men have leaves in front of them on which sticks with roast-balls are placed. A little higher towards the right are two more men armed with knives and cutting pieces of flesh from the carcass. The scene is somewhat gruesome, yet it shows the craven nature of man when confronted with the prospect of death through hunger.

<sup>1</sup> The story is also painted in Cave XVI, on the wall of the front corridor, and a description of the painting with a summary of the story (*Jātaka-mālā*, No. 30) is given in *Ajanta*, iii, 46–47, Plates XLVIII *b*–XLIX.

#### AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

Farther down, near the bottom on the right side (Plate XIV *a*), a part of the head of an elephant—his forehead, the right eye, and a part of the trunk—may be seen. It is as if he has passed on to heaven, and notices from there how his sacrifice has saved the lives of the merchants who were in peril of death through starvation.

Below this incident, on the lower part of the wall, the figure of a rājā, with three attendants, can be made out. The rājā is wearing a crown, and his complexion is somewhat fair—a golden brown. One of his attendants, who has a ruddy complexion, has raised two of his fingers, the middle one and the forefinger, as if to remind the rājā of a certain important event. The figures of the other two attendants are very indistinct.

From the poor condition of this fresco it is difficult to state whether the figures painted below are connected with the *Hasti Jātaka*, delineated above, or represent a portion of some other story.

#### THE BESTOWAL OF THE ROYAL SWORD (?): NOT IDENTIFIED

##### Plate XV

*The scene is painted on the left wall of the front corridor, left of the cell-door, in Cave XVII.*

THE above title for this subject was tentatively adopted by Lady Herringham,<sup>1</sup> and it has been retained here until the *Jātaka* shall be identified. The main theme of the incident is, however, clear: the benevolence, or the keen sense of justice, of a king is being tried by gods, one of whom has disguised himself as a Brahman mendicant and is pressing the king either for the bestowal of a gift which he had previously promised, or for the decision of the case in which the son of the king, or some other prince whose life is dear to the king, is involved, and he thus finds it hard to accede to the request of the Brahman.<sup>2</sup> Below, at the bottom, the heads of two figures wearing crowns, one of whom has a third eye in his forehead, may suggest that they are Śakra and another god interested in the trial of the king (the Bodhisattva). The drawing and the colour-scheme of the subject are excellent, and the style of delineation of the features of some of the ladies shows that this subject was painted by the same artist who painted the *Viśvantara Jātaka* on the wall of the left corridor, to be described later in this book (*infra*, pp. 43–52).

In this painting the king is shown sitting in a pavilion, the roof and cornice of which would interest students of architecture. The roof is supported by columns, having cross-beams and

<sup>1</sup> Herringham, *Ajanta Frescoes*, Text, p. 10.

<sup>2</sup> Such trials are mentioned more than once in the *Jātakas*, for example in the *Śibi Jātaka*, I–II, and the *Viśvantara Jātaka*. As this subject is painted on the wall opposite to the one on which the *Śibi Jātaka* II is delineated, some scholars have suggested that it may be

identified with the story of the charitable king Chandra-prabha who cut off his head to give it in charity to a Brahman beggar who asked for it (*Divyāvadāna*, No. 22). The scenes painted on the rock-wall, however, differ considerably from those given in the legend.

PLATE XV

rafters above them on which the roof finally rests. The cornice is curvilinear, in the so-called Dravidian style, and at its top is a frieze on which elephants, oxen, and other animals are represented. The frieze in the original building would have been of stone, and the figures represented would have been carved on it. Above the frieze is a balcony with an opening in front and lattices on two sides. Six ladies are to be seen in the window, one with a fair complexion, who through grief has placed her left arm on her head, and with the right hand is covering her face to conceal her tears. Her fingers and nails are painted with great care. The expression of the face of another lady, to her left, also indicates feelings of sorrow. She may be a maid of honour to the lady with the fair complexion, who is probably the queen. The features, the head-dress, and the pose of this maid exhibit art of a high order. Farther to the left the face of another lady may be seen, a face which expresses sorrow. On the right side of the queen there are three more maids; one of them has a very dark complexion, but she is richly bedecked with ornaments; a coronet held by strings of pearls may be seen on her head, and also pearl necklaces round her neck. She is wearing the large wheel-pattern ear-rings which were probably in fashion in the Deccan in the early centuries of the Christian era. The maid at the extreme right appears to be elderly, but her features are very refined. She too is wearing costly ornaments, a bejewelled band round her forehead and strings of pearls falling round her neck, and her face also betrays sorrow. Behind the queen and the black maid the head of another maid may be noticed, whose curled fluffy hair shows the artist's love of variety.

Behind the balcony,<sup>1</sup> and also towards its left, the rich foliage of banana-, areca-nut-, and mango-trees may be noticed, the various shades of green contrasting well with the red tint of the building. The mango-tree is shown laden with red fruit.

Returning to the king, seated in the pavilion, one may perceive anxiety writ large on his face. He has a long sword with a black sheath and round pommel in his right hand, and appears to be contemplating what action he should take with regard to the stern remonstrance of the Brahman, who is pointing with his forefinger either to the dark figure immediately behind him or to the prince himself, who also with a gesture of his forefinger is suggesting something relevant to the statement of the Brahman. The dark figure has been brought into the scene either as a witness to support the plea of the Brahman or as a victim of the prince's alleged misbehaviour towards him. The thick nose of the dark figure, which is also bent in the middle, adds further ugliness to his otherwise coarse features. He is armed with a bow and also carries something on his back which is held by the loop of a string attached to his forefinger. The black man may be the chief of some forest tribe, since he is wearing ear-rings with drops of pearls. The features and the dress of the Brahman are very typical, and the expression of his eyes and face suggests that there is an evil motive behind the outward calm.

The artist, to exhibit his skill in depicting feminine beauty, has given most charming features and expressions to the two *chaurī*-bearers standing behind the royal chair (Plate XV).

<sup>1</sup> On the cornice, above the balcony window, there is an inscription in red paint, giving the name of some person. The inscription, judging from the style of its letters, is some two centuries posterior in date to the fresco (fifth century A.D.), and has no connexion with it. Cf. *Ajanta*, iii, Text, 96 (Plate IX a).

#### AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

Both are of a golden-brown complexion, and their eyes, eye-brows, noses, lips, and the general cut of the face, which is oval in shape, all attract attention by their elegance. Their head-dresses and ornaments are also very striking. Close to the *chaurī*-bearer on the right side there was another lady, wearing a high crown. Her features, as far as they are preserved, are also attractive. Behind the prince, on the left side, are two male attendants, both with gloomy expressions. One of them is of a fair complexion and the other is dark.

Above the head of the prince a fat red bird may be noticed, perched on the cornice. It is looking at the lady at the extreme left end of the balcony, who is pointing towards the bird with her forefinger. The bird may be the harbinger of some evil news, and this may have some important bearing on the story.

The importance of the painting as a masterpiece of art must not be thought less of because the story which it represents has not yet been identified. The talent and exquisite taste of the artist are amply proved by the graceful drawing of human figures, the lovely choice of colours, notably in the delineation of trees, and above all by the life-like representation of emotion and feeling.

#### A COURT-SCENE: *NOT IDENTIFIED*

##### *Plate XVI a-b*

*The scene is painted on the left wall of the front corridor, above the cell-door, in Cave XVII.*

THE original painting is very dark and has not been improved perceptibly by recent cleaning operations, yet the important figures which constitute the story can be made out. The *Jātaka*, however, is not identified, but it is apparently connected with the story painted below (Plate XV), because the fat bird which is shown sitting on the cornice in the last scene appears here again, and it is twitching with its beak the head-ornament of one of the two ladies who as pilgrims (?) are approaching the court of a rājā (Plate XVI a). One of these ladies holds a basket containing victuals, suspended from her hand with a string, and the other lady holds a banner, the stick of which may be seen on her shoulder. The banner may represent an important detail of the belongings of a pilgrim. They have approached the court of the rājā for redress, from which act the fat bird wanted to stop them. Two *chaurī*-bearers of a fair complexion may be noticed behind the royal seat, their pose being extremely graceful (Plate XVI a). Close to the *chaurī*-bearer on the right side there is another lady who holds a chased vessel or casket in her left hand, while her right hand is stretched towards the royal seat, and perhaps resting on it. She may be the rānī; she is wearing an ornament, comprising three strings of pearls, round her head. The modelling of the right hand of this figure is very effective.

In front of the royal seat are two dwarfs and close to them two more figures, one of a chief with a dark complexion and the other of a chief with a ruddy complexion. The heads of these two figures have been painted in profile, and show skilful drawing. The dark chief, who is

PLATE XVI *a-b*

on the right side, is wearing rich jewellery, and the painter, to bring his figure into prominence, has placed high lights on his nose, lips, and chin.

To the left of the rājā, near the bottom of the painting, there are some more chiefs sitting on cushions or low thrones. They are apparently discussing the religious aspect or the moral of the story, for each of them has made a loop (*chakra*) with his fingers. The chief nearest the rājā also has his consort with him. The next figure, towards the left, is probably a *yaksha* (? spirit of the forest), since his face is tinted with green. He is sitting on a low throne and holds a gold chain (?) in his left hand, which chain is evidently about to be restored to its owner. The *yaksha* may have taken part in disguise in testing the virtue of the rājā, as is suggested in the story painted below (Plate XV). The next chief, to the left, has his right hand stretched out as if to suggest that he holds something on his palm; or else the attitude represents a *mudrā*. Farther to the left, a richly caparisoned elephant and a white palfrey with a tassel of yak's tail over his head may be seen. They evidently belong to the chiefs who have assembled in the court. The elephant has twisted his trunk and placed it on one of his tusks in an attempt to make a loop (*chakra*), so as to conform to the common attitude of the assembly.

To the right of the above scene there is another representing a court, but as the painting has become very dark it is difficult to state whether it is another episode of the last story or is connected with the *Hamsa Jātaka*, painted immediately below it (Plate XVII *a-b*). The colours of the painting cannot be distinguished now, all being merged into a dark daub, but such details of the drawing as can still be made out are given below, so that some student of Buddhist literature may perhaps be able to help in identifying it. A collotype reproduction of the subject is also published here with the same object (Plate XVI *b*).

Beginning from the left side, there is first a woman whose head has been painted in profile. She is dressed in a *choli* and a *sāri*, the cloth of the latter having a check design. The ribbons attached to her head-ornaments may be seen on her back. Her features are of the aboriginal type. The figure to her right is also a woman, but she must be of some rank, since she is shown sitting on a chair. The features of her face have become quite indistinct, but her elaborate jewellery can be made out. Further to the right are two male figures, dressed in white full-sleeved coats. One of them in the front has made a loop with his fingers. His companion, similarly dressed, has a greenish complexion. The head of another male figure may be noticed between the last two. There is a copper-skinned chief to the left of the rājā, sitting cross-legged on a throne. This copper-skinned chief holds a casket in his hand. There are traces of some figures to the right of the throne, but as the fresco has peeled off at that place their features and dresses cannot be determined. A conical vessel (? spittoon) may be noticed below the throne, and there is a metal water-jar with chased work to the right.

## THE *HAMSA JĀTAKA*, OR THE STORY OF THE GOLDEN GOOSE

### Plate XVII *a–b*

*The story is painted on the left wall and the adjoining pilaster of the front corridor, to the right of the cell-door, in Cave XVII.*

**T**HIS *jātaka* appears to have been very popular, since it is painted in two places at Ajanta and is also represented at Borobudur.<sup>1</sup> In this *vihāra* (XVII) the story is painted in two episodes—the hunters catching the sacred bird, Dhṛitarāshṭra, with the captain of the flock, Sumukha, in the lotus-lake; and the court-scene in which the Sacred Goose is teaching the Law to the rājā of Benares, Samyama, and his consort Khemā, who had seen in a dream a Golden Goose preaching the Doctrine. The lake-scene begins from the bottom of the court-scene, and is continued on the turn of the wall towards the right, where a flock of geese may be noticed flying up from the lake in a state of panic. The fright of the birds has been clearly suggested by their wild looks, half-open beaks, upturned necks, and unevenly spread wings. Some of the birds are red, some grey, and some white. Lower down, a dark man with curly hair may be noticed carrying two birds, perched on the palms of his two hands. He may be identified with the hunter of the story and the two birds with Dhṛitarāshṭra and Sumukha, who asked the hunter to take them to the rājā lest he should be deprived of the reward which the rājā had promised to anyone who should capture them.

In the second scene, the two birds are shown seated on thrones, facing the rājā, as if preaching the Law to him and his wife and other attendants of the court. To describe the personages of the court, beginning from the left: there is first a lady of reddish complexion, probably the rānī, Khemā, as a large umbrella is being held over her head. She is short in stature, but her coiffure, dress, and ornaments all exhibit elegance. She is standing close to the throne of her royal consort and listening with rapt attention to the sermon of the Sacred Goose. There are two maids, one on each side of the rānī. One of them is painted with a reddish complexion, the other being greenish; both are wearing rich jewellery. The maid with the greenish complexion, who holds a fly-whisk in her hand, has a crown or a globular cap of some ornamental type on her head. The facial features of the rājā are somewhat obliterated in the original fresco, so that it is difficult to judge of his feelings while listening to the sermon of the Golden Goose; but the delineation of his hands—the palm of his right hand exposed and the fingers arranged in the form of a *chakra*—suggests that he is following the instructions of the sacred bird. The rājā has a large blue stone (? sapphire) in the middle of his crown, and the seat of his throne is woven with tapes of red and white design. Next to the rājā is perhaps the *yuvārāja* (the prince), who has also made a *chakra* with his fingers, a conventional symbol to suggest that he who makes it is eagerly receiving instruction in the Law. To the right of the *yuvārāja* there is a red figure with no head-ornament

<sup>1</sup> Cf. *Ajanta*, ii, text, pp. 12–14, Plates XV–XVI; *Jātaka*, iv, 264–7 and v, 178–202; *Jātaka-mālā*, No. 22, and *Boro-Budur*, Plates 154–5.

PLATE XVII *a-b*

but seated on a chair. He is dressed in a full-sleeved coat and short *dhotī*, his knees and the lower part of the legs being uncovered, but the curious thing about his dress is that he is wearing striped socks. The cut of his face and the style in which his hair is dressed indicate that he belongs to the priestly class. He also has made a loop with the fingers of his two hands. Between the *yuvrāja* and the priest there is a stalwart figure with long hair and costly ornaments. He has raised the first three fingers of his right hand straight up, and with the forefinger and the thumb has made a loop. The fingers of all the figures represented in the scene are slender and of a tapering form. Behind the seats of the *rājā* and the *yuvrāja* are two male attendants, one of a greenish and the other of a ruddy complexion. The complexions in this painting appear to be conventional, the red representing a light brown complexion and the green a shining dark complexion, often to be noticed among the inhabitants of the Deccan. These attendants also have made loops with the fingers of their hands.

Behind the royal chair on which the Golden Goose is sitting there are two ladies, one of whom holds a tray of flowers and the other a fly-whisk. The poise of these two figures is very graceful. The lady carrying the tray may be the *rānī* herself, but her coiffure is of a different style from that of the princess represented under the royal umbrella, on the left side of the fresco. The other lady, holding the fly-whisk, may be the counterpart of the maid standing behind the *rājā*, as she has the same greenish complexion and a globular ornamental cap or crown. There is another figure of a dark complexion to be noticed behind the red-skinned priest. She, too, is a maid of honour in attendance at the court. A dark attendant may also be seen near the throne of the *rājā* on the left side. He is wearing a full-sleeved long white coat and has thrown his red scarf across his chest and left shoulder in such a way that at first sight it appears to be a *sārī*. The artist has taken delight in presenting striking contrasts in the dark tint of the complexion of this figure and the red and white of his costume.

There is a canopy in the background, the openings of which are closed with curtains of ornamental design. The walls and pillars of the court-pavilion are hung with cloths or tapestries of floral patterns such as are to be seen even today in the *himrū* and *mashrū* manufactured in Aurangābād.

Apart from the religious significance of the painting, the artist's close observation and skill in the delineation of the flock of geese in the lake-scene and the poise of the female figures in the court-scene are worthy of praise.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Below the throne of the *rājā* the fresco has peeled off from the rock-wall, but a dark figure may be made out which is probably that of the hunter who has brought the

Golden Goose and his captain to the court and is waiting for the promised reward (Plate XVII).

## ŚĀRDŪLAS, APSARASAS AND THE BUDDHA IN THE TEACHING ATTITUDE

### Plate XVIII a-b

*These figures are painted on the pilaster between the front and left corridors in Cave XVII.*

ON two sides of this pilaster are painted some mythical beings with the figure of the Buddha and two Bodhisattvas or *Lokesvaras* as attendants. On the façade looking towards the front corridor is the figure of a *śārdūla* with two red *gaṇas*, one above and the other below. The drawing of these figures is pleasing to the eye.

On the middle façade, at the top, is a pair of *apsarasas* flying amidst clouds, as is suggested at least by the position of their bodies. The figure on the right has bent one of her legs, as if in an attempt to make a rapid movement. The painting through various causes has become very dark now, but the outlines of the heads of these figures, which can still be made out, show skilful workmanship combined with refined taste (XVIII a). One *apsaras* holds an *ektārā* (stringed musical instrument) in her hand.

Below, the figure of the Buddha is painted, who is shown sitting on a throne, with a halo behind his head and a canopy above, while his feet rest on a large lotus-flower. The canopy is bedecked with strings of pearls. On either side of the throne there is a Bodhisattva or *Lokesvara* in attendance, holding a fly-whisk in his right hand. As these attendants have haloes behind their heads, and are also wearing crowns, their celestial rank among the Buddhist deities appears to be an important one. The attendant on the right side holds a water-flask in his left hand, the water-flask being the emblem of the Bodhisattva Maitreya. The figure on the left may have been holding a rosary, but as the fresco is damaged at that place the identification cannot be made with certainty. The drawing of these two figures shows no rigidity, since the line of axis moves several times between the head and the feet.

Below the throne are four votaries, two on each side of it, who have brought offerings of flowers and garlands, which may be seen in their hands. These figures in comparison with the figure of the Buddha are of a much smaller size, the idea of the artist being to indicate the spiritual or religious significance of a being by the size of his representation.

The fresco has peeled off from the rock-wall at the place where the head and chest of the Buddha were painted, so that the expression of his face cannot be determined, but the position of his hands suggests that he was in the teaching attitude (*dharma-chakra mudrā*).

# THE *VIŚVANTARA JATAKA*, OR THE STORY OF THE PRINCE DEVOTED TO ALMSGIVING<sup>1</sup>

Plates XIX–XXVI

*The story is painted on the wall of the left corridor in Cave XVII.*

THE *Jātaka* is delineated in considerable detail, and the scenes on the rock-wall tally with the main episodes as given in the text. To begin with the left end of the wall, there is the royal chamber in which Viśvantara breaks the unpleasant news of his banishment to his consort Mādrī, and suggests that she, being young and fair, should seek a husband for herself and 'not pine alone'. The artist, to enhance the emotional effect of the scene, has delineated Mādrī with all the charms of youth and beauty which he could imagine. The representation may not be realistic in its details, but it is most artistic in general effect. The pose, the facial features, the several parts of the body, the arms, the fingers, even the toes, show grace and sensitiveness combined with the exuberance of youth (Plates XIX–XX a). The news must have shocked her, but the artist, to show the strength of her noble character, has given her a grave and sober expression. The features of the maid standing behind the princess are also exquisite, but the news has cast a gloom over her face and the lips have opened slightly as if lightly breathing an involuntary sigh. The figure of Viśvantara is painted on the front of the wall, whilst the princess is delineated on the turn of the wall towards the left; thus there is a little detachment between the two figures, although both are in the same pavilion and under the same roof, the painting being continued from one side of the wall to the other. Viśvantara has been shown in a contemplative religious mood: he has made a loop (*chakra*) with the fingers of his right hand, while to suggest endurance under the burden of circumstances he has flung out his left hand with the palm exposed.

There is another maid of dark complexion to the right of Viśvantara who is looking pitifully at him. The drawing of the feet of this maid and also of the feet of Viśvantara is not perfect, but the artists of Ajanta did not care for such petty irregularities, their ideal being to give an inner expression and general artistic effect to the subject, and these aims are admirably achieved in this painting. The colour-scheme of the subject also exhibits attractive contrasts of tints.

Below the royal pavilion scene the fresco is damaged, but three figures can be made out. One in the middle has long curly hair, which is decorated with a large lotus-flower at the crown. The head of the next figure, to the left, has been painted in profile, and the fixed stare of her eyes indicates that some calamity has occurred. The third figure is rather dwarfish in size, but the large wheel-pattern ear-rings, the thick nose, and the long hair are strikingly effective in giving life to the picture (Plate XIX c).

The next episode, in which Viśvantara pays obeisance to his parents, Sañjaya and Phusatī,

<sup>1</sup> In the *Jātaka-māla* (No. 9), the name of the prince is Viśvantara as given above, but on the veranda of Cave XVII the name is spelt Vaiśvantara, which is the correct Sanskrit form of the Pāli Vessantara. Cf. *Ajanta*, iii, 96. For the Pāli form see the *Jātaka*, vi, 251. *Mādrī* in Pāli is *Maddī*.

### AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

before proceeding into exile, is painted above the first and second cell-doors. The fresco has become very dark now, and consequently only a lithographic reproduction of the outline of the subject is included in the plates (Plate XXI *a*). To begin from the left side, a queen (*Phusatī*) is shown seated on a throne, and a prince (*Viśvantara*) has knelt down before her, stretching out his hands in front and joining them to show his respect to the mother-queen. The head of the queen is damaged in the original fresco, but the beauty of the coils of her hair seen over her shoulders and back can still be admired. There are three maids in the front, below the figures of the queen and the prince, whom the artist has painted in three different poses. The maid on the left side, as her features show, is an aboriginal, and her short dumpy nose and thick lips have been made prominent by the drawing of her head in profile. The middle figure has her back turned towards the spectator, and the artist has taken advantage of this pose to show her waist-line and the contours of the lower parts of the body. Her hair is being dressed by the third maid, who is sitting on the right side. The style in which the coiffure of the second maid will be finished is shown in the circular knot of the hair of the third maid. The latter has turned her neck gracefully and is looking towards the front. The features of this maid are very refined and offer a contrast to those of the maid on the left side. The drawing of these three figures is not only graceful but realistic to a degree, since Indian women are in fact often seen squatting on the floor in this fashion. To keep up the religious character of the scene, all three maids have been represented as making *chakras* with their fingers.

On either side of the queen is a female *chaurī*-bearer, and there are two more maids, one of short stature, close to the prince, and the other a little higher up to the right of the *chaurī*-bearer. These two maids are holding ornaments, probably to present them to the prince at the instance of the queen so that he may give them away in alms in accordance with the desire of his heart. According to the *Jātaka* the prince asked the people of the kingdom that his banishment might be delayed by a day, so that 'the gift of seven hundreds' could be performed.<sup>1</sup> The queen is probably giving the ornaments to the prince in this scene in order to furnish him with resources for 'the gift of the seven hundreds' which he was planning to perform.

The king's (Sañjaya's) chamber is shown in the painting as adjoining that of the queen. He is seated on the throne, and his face betrays anxiety. The gesture made by his right hand is not clear, because the fresco has become very black at that place, but his left hand is stretched a little forward with the palm exposed. *Viśvantara* has knelt down before him and joined his hands, holding them in front, as a mark of respect to his father. There are two lady attendants behind the throne of the king whose elaborate coiffures are worthy of notice. A little above the representation of *Viśvantara* there are two male figures, one of a reddish complexion and the other dark. The swarthy figure is that of a court attendant, whilst the

<sup>1</sup> The 'gift of the seven hundreds' is thus described in the prince's own words addressed to one of his captains: 'Tomorrow I am to make the gift called the gift of the seven hundreds. You must get ready seven hundred

elephants, with the same number of horses, chariots, girls, cows, men slaves and women slaves, and provide every kind of food and drink, even strong liquor, everything which is fit to give.' Cf. *Jātaka*, vi, 256.

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reddish figure probably represents the king's minister, since he is sitting on a low throne in front of the king. Close to the minister, to the right, is a lady with greenish (dark) complexion. Her features are good and the hair is also artistically arranged. Farther to the right are two more figures; one of them has long hair and swollen cheeks, and the other has a long stick in his hand and is sitting on a low chair. He may be the citizens' agent(?) at the court of the king whom Viśvantara, following the story in the *Jātaka*, has asked to convey his request to the citizens that his banishment may be delayed by a day. To the right of the above scene (the king's court), the artist has painted another showing Viśvantara going out of the city with the royal retinue to perform 'the gift of the seven hundreds' alluded to above. The fresco is considerably damaged at this place, but such details of the painting as have survived are reproduced in the lithographic Plate XXI. Commencing from the left side, we notice first a large elephant which is shown in rapid movement. A *charkatā* is sitting on the rump of the animal, while the *mahāvat* is on his neck; but as the upper part of the figure of the *mahāvat* has vanished he can be identified only by the still visible lower part of his body. By the side of the elephant, on the right, are two spear-bearers, one of whom is an aboriginal, as the drawing of his nose and cheek-bones would seem to indicate. The head of a third attendant may also be seen in the curve made by the trunk of the elephant. There is another elephant close by, but its figure is much damaged in the fresco. By the side of the latter elephant there are five more attendants, three of whom are armed with short curved swords and two with spears. The artist has given a different pose and different features to each of these attendants. In front of the elephant is a pair of horses, only one of which is included in the lithographic reproduction. It is delineated as going at a gallop. The other horse can still be seen in the original fresco, and the drawing of both these horses is perfect. By the side of the galloping horse are three musicians of the royal retinue, one playing on a *dholak* (double drum), another blowing a conch, and the third, who has a scarf round his shoulders, playing on some other instrument. By the side of the horses figures of two grooms may also be noticed, one of whom is wearing a peaked cap. A little farther to the right are three more figures, one representing a mendicant Brahman, as is shown by his outstretched hand, another probably representing a god in disguise, who is watching Viśvantara's alms-giving here, regarded as a proof of his piety and virtue. The third figure is holding a staff. He may be an attendant of the royal retinue. Proceeding farther towards the right, three more figures may be noticed, and close by, above the hills, is the representation of a hermit who has a table in front of him. The legs of the table cross one another like those of a folding camp-cot. Above the figures of elephants, referred to above, two ladies may be seen, who are watching the cavalcade from windows. Their feelings of sorrow can be discerned from the manner in which one of them has placed her head on her hand. There are some more figures near by, one of which represents a woman who is also watching the passing of the procession.

In the middle of the wall, between cell-doors 1 and 3, are painted the two scenes which represent Viśvantara leaving the city with his wife Mādrī and his two children Jāli and Kanhājinā in 'a gorgeous carriage', drawn by a team of four 'Sindh horses', and his giving

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away to Brahmins the horses and finally the chariot in which he had been driving. In the first scene the fresco is in a comparatively better state of preservation, and both drawing and colours are more or less well preserved. At the left end of the fresco is the gate of the city or the palace, and close by is an areca-nut tree, the green leaves of which make a striking contrast with the red of the buildings behind. The carriage, styled 'gorgeous' in the *Jātaka*, is a rectangular open wooden cart, the spokes of the wheels, of course, having an ornamental curved shape (Plate XXIII). The four 'Sindh horses' represent some noble breed, as is shown by their arched necks and other indications of race. From the position of their curved forelegs it appears that the animals are going at a rapid trot. The harness of the horses is of black-and-white leather pieces, joined in alternate colours. The carriage is passing through a bazaar, three shops of which are visible, one that of a milkman, who has two pails of milk and a basin of curds (?) before him. He has stood up and is doing *dandot* to the prince by raising both his hands in salutation. The second shop is that of an oilman, who is occupied in pouring oil into a small cup with a circular spoon. The third shop is probably that of a grocer, who is weighing something in his scales. In one pan circular weights, apparently of stone, may be noticed. On the right side of the grocer there are circular dishes and pots in which provisions are shown. Architecturally, these shops are small pillared rooms with curvilinear *chhajjas* (cornices). Above the shops are the living-apartments of the shopkeepers, whose wives or other relatives are watching the departure of Viśvantara from the windows.

In front of the chariot are three men, and another is by the side of the horses, this fourth figure being of a dark complexion; he is bowing low begging for alms and has exposed his teeth in a propitiatory smile. Of the other three, one has made a gesture to stop the vehicle so that Viśvantara may listen to his supplication; another, who is of a swarthy complexion, has stretched out his hand as if to beg. The third, who has long hair and a dangling moustache, is appealing for alms by making religious gestures. He has made a *chakra* with the fingers of his right hand. The painter in these beggars has apparently represented the four Brahmins who arrived too late on the day of 'the gift of the seven hundreds', and who, on hearing that Viśvantara had left the city in a chariot drawn by four horses, came to ask for the horses.<sup>1</sup>

Viśvantara has apparently acceded to the request of the Brahmins and given them the horses from his chariot, because he is shown below standing with his wife and children as if he has alighted from the chariot after making the gift. There are, however, four more mendicant Brahmins in front of him, who are either those who have secured the gift of the horses and have appeared here in a different guise to test further the piety of the prince in alms-giving, or are different mendicants who have come to ask for assistance. The features of each of these suppliants are different. Two of them have twisted tufts of hair on the crowns of their heads. The robe and features of another show him to be a Chinese (in the fifth century A.D., Chinese pilgrims had begun to visit Buddhist monasteries and sacred places in India). The fourth mendicant apparently belongs to a different order, since his hair is dressed in a

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, vi, 265.

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special style and the *kundalas* (ear-rings) which he is wearing pass through the middle of his ears and are not suspended from the lobes.

In the lower part of the fresco, perhaps near the base of the wall, the scene of 'the gift of the seven hundreds' was delineated, but as the fresco is much damaged, all that can be made out is the figures of the friars who are being feasted and of a prince seated on a throne and discoursing on some religious topic to the attendants of his court. The figure of a female *chaurī*-bearer to the left of the prince is also clear. Among the friars the one with Chinese features appears again; perhaps his physiognomy had struck the fancy of the artist and he has therefore painted him twice.

The next incident after the giving away of the four horses of the chariot to the four mendicant Brahmans is the bestowal of the chariot itself upon another Brahman, who approaches Viśvantara at a later stage of his journey towards Mount Vamka, the place of his exile. This episode, with other connected incidents, is painted on the rock-wall between the second and third cell-doors. According to the *Jātaka* version, when the four 'Sindh horses' of the royal carriage were given away in alms to the four Brahmans, four gods in the guise of red deer appeared on the scene and yoked themselves to the carriage, in which Viśvantara and his party drove away. In the painting the carriage with its inmates is seen, but it is pulled by four horses instead of the four red deer of the *Jātaka*. It appears that according to the story delineated at Ajanta the gods assumed the forms of horses in order to pull the carriage of Viśvantara and party. The horses are quite clear, although the figures of the inmates of the carriage are indistinct both in the original fresco and in the colour-reproduction (Plate XXV). The reins of the horses are held by Viśvantara, and on his right side is Mādrī. The figures of the Brahman who asked for the chariot, and those of Viśvantara and Mādrī who granted his request, are delineated a little lower, to the left of the horses, and are a masterpiece of Ajanta art. The cringing attitude of the mendicant, combined with the typical style of his scanty dress and the appearance of his shaved forehead and the thin dangling moustache, present a portrait perfectly realistic in form and full of sentiment in expression (Plates XXIV a-XXV). The faces of Viśvantara and Mādrī exhibit the reserve appropriate to their royal position, and to confirm his gift Viśvantara, according to the practice of the time, is pouring water from a pot on to the palm of the mendicant. The horses, with the occupants of the carriage, may be noticed behind Viśvantara and Mādrī, who in order to make the gift had alighted from the carriage.

To the right of the last incident a scene showing belts of hills may be noticed in which the figure of Mādrī is represented several times. According to the *Jātaka*, when Viśvantara entered the hermitage 'Maddī asked for a boon from him: "My lord, do you stay here with the children, instead of going out in search of wild fruits, and let me go instead".'<sup>1</sup> Viśvantara granted Mādrī's request, and afterwards she used to collect fruit from the forest and feed Viśvantara and the two children.

Behind the hermitage-scene, towards the left, a tall figure dressed in a full-sleeved long coat (*aṅgrakhā*) may be noticed. He appears to be a royal attendant, and is apparently

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

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connected with the story of the giving away of the chariot to a Brahman, as described above. The outline of this figure shows good modelling, although the facial features are so far destroyed that they cannot be made out (Plate XXV).

Between the third and fourth cell-doors several incidents of the story are most graphically delineated by the artist, and as the fresco here is in a fairly good state of preservation, they are reproduced in the colour-plate XXVI. They commence with the bestowal of his children by Viśvantara upon the Brahman Jūjaka, and end with their restoration to their grandfather, King Sañjaya, after the payment of a large sum by the latter to the greedy Brahman as ransom. To describe the incidents in their proper sequence one should begin at the bottom left corner of the painting, where Viśvantara may be noticed holding a pot of water to pour on to the hand of Jūjaka, who has bent servilely before him for the ceremonial confirmation of the gift.<sup>1</sup> The two children, Jāli and Kaphājinā, who had been given away, are painted between Viśvantara and Jūjaka. The wild, indignant look in the eyes of the children indicates anger mixed with sorrow. The cast of the face of the Brahman and the way in which he is staring at Viśvantara show the artist's imagination and his power of giving vivid effect to his subject. There is little brush-work in the figure, but what there is shows delightful taste; for instance, in the indication of the goat-like beard of the mendicant or the wiry hair on the back of his head. The limbs of his body are defined by a bold, vigorous line with a rhythmic sweep. To add a comic effect to the subject the artist has painted a square umbrella over the head of the Brahman which protects him from the sun. This umbrella is an inseparable accoutrement of the Brahman, and he appears with it even in the court of King Sañjaya, painted above on the rock-wall (Plate XXVI).

According to the *Jātaka*, the Brahman ill-treated the children on his return journey during the daytime, but the gods soothed them in the night, and protected them against the danger from the wild beasts to which they were exposed because Jūjaka climbed up a tree for the night to make himself safe, and left the children below, bound with osiers.<sup>2</sup> The next event, painted in the middle, on the left side, shows the children in charge of a reddish figure with long hair who is apparently a god in disguise. Moved by a feeling of compassion at the treatment of the children by the Brahman, he is apparently settling with him the terms on which he would agree to restore the children to their father. The Brahman has been delineated with a goatee beard and carrying a square umbrella, while one of the children, who are now in charge of the red-skinned person, is looking fiercely at the Brahman and complaining against the cruel treatment meted out to them. Another event in which Jūjaka appears is painted in the middle, where the children are shown with Viśvantara and another person, whose head only is visible. The colour of the body of Jūjaka has faded in the original painting, but he can be easily identified by his uncouth features and by the square umbrella which he carries. The fresco has peeled off near the head of Viśvantara (Plate XXVI), and the expression of his face cannot be judged, but as he has made loops (*chakras*) with the fingers of both his hands it appears that he was in a contemplative mood. His poise is graceful, and a sword hangs from his belt on his left side. It is also possible that this figure may not be that

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, vi, 283.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 298 ff.

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of Viśvantara but that of a god taking his place, since according to the *Jātaka* version Viśvantara stayed on at the hermitage in the dales of the Vamka Mount until his father Sañjaya went over there with a large retinue to bring him back with royal pomp and glory.<sup>1</sup>

The next event is the appearance of Jūjaka at the royal court to receive the ransom money, where he is shown in high spirits and full of glee (Plates XX *b* and XXVI). The artist has delineated all his ugly features—the broken front teeth, the goatee beard, the bald forehead and the spiky hair at the back of his skull, the parrot-like nose and small, uncanny eyes, combined with the brightness which has come over his face at the jingle of the money which the royal treasurer is pouring into his outspread scarf. The expression of joy may also be perceived from the treatment of his eyes, and the artist has further enhanced it by placing highlights on the nose and lips of the Brahman. The features of Sañjaya are not clear in the original painting, but they would have been more or less of a conventional type, because the artist seems to have devoted his entire attention to giving an effective representation of the Brahman, emphasizing the deformities of his body as well as bringing out the mean traits in his nature.

In front of the king, three chiefs are shown sitting on cushions. They may be *arhats* who looked after the safety of the children when they were given to Jūjaka by Viśvantara. One of them has a greenish complexion; they are all wearing crowns. To the left of Sañjaya is Phusatī, sitting on a throne, and between them one of the two children, perhaps Jāli. The pose of Phusatī is natural and also very effective. She is looking affectionately towards Jāli. Behind the king, on the right, is a *chaurī*-bearer of greenish complexion. Her coiffure is worthy of notice.

Behind the figure of Jūjaka, towards the left, is perhaps the continuation of the royal palace, in which three swarthy figures may be noticed, sitting in three different chambers. These figures have coarse features and apparently represent servants, but they have made loops (*chakras*) with the fingers of their hands to maintain the religious significance of the entire painting. In the chamber adjoining the courtroom two bottle-shaped vessels may be seen in a niche, and also a jar with a stick in it (?). Below the court scene, in the bottom right corner of the fresco, the painter has delineated a sheet of water with aquatic birds and lotus flowers in different stages of bloom. This subject apparently represents the lake Muchalinda, which was in the vicinity of Mount Vamka, where Viśvantara lived in exile. In the *Jātaka* text the lake is described in these words:

'There, farther still towards the north, is Mucalinda Lake,  
On which the lilies blue and white a covering do make.'<sup>2</sup>

The painter has shown geese, cranes, and other birds in a variety of delightful poses, and has covered the surface of the lake with the green leaves of water-plants. The white flowers of the lilies combined with the white plumes of the birds offer a pleasant contrast to the otherwise green setting of the subject.

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, vi, 295.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 269.

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Above the second and third cell-doors in the upper part of the wall some more incidents of the story are painted, but as the fresco has become very dark, and the outline of the figures is also indistinct, it is not possible to set forth the events pictured in a coherent manner. Some of the figures which have been made out are, however, described here. Beginning at the left side, there is a monk with a table in front of him and two guards standing behind. The guards are armed with batons, the shape of one baton being like that of a goad. The head of the monk has been almost obliterated and his features cannot be seen. The monk was apparently discoursing to a devotee, who is listening to the sermon with fixed attention. The curve of the devotee's back has been indicated by a bold line. Towards the right of these figures is the representation of a king with a prince in front of him. The latter is shown in an attitude of reverence before the king, with joined hands. These two figures may be identified as those of Sañjaya and Viśvantara. A little below there are three more figures in the painting, one of a god (?Sakra), as it would seem, since a third eye is visible in his forehead, and the other two of ladies, who may be Phusatī and Mādrī. The scene may represent the meeting of Sañjaya and Phusatī with his son and daughter-in-law, after the successful test by Śakra of Viśvantara's virtue in almsgiving.

From the top of the third cell-door right to the end of the wall are painted scenes of the return of Viśvantara and Mādrī with the royal army. The artist has started from the hermitage in the forest where Viśvantara bestowed his beloved son and daughter upon Jūjaka (Plate XXI). The features of Jūjaka show the same ugliness and his attitude the same servility as are to be noticed in the other scenes in which he appears (Plate XXV). Viśvantara is shown on the doorstep of a hut made of the branches of trees and covered with teak or banyan leaves. His face indicates an inner calm and nobility of character. The two children Jāli and Kaṇhājinā are sitting beside him. Above the hut Viśvantara is shown riding on a stately elephant with rich trappings. An attendant is sitting behind him holding the royal umbrella over the king's head. The figure of the elephant has been drawn with great care and devotion; even such minor details as the wrinkles of the animal's skin below the eyes or on the trunk have not been overlooked. The gesture made by Viśvantara with the fingers of his hand, and also the expression of his face, are somewhat conventional. The head of another elephant with a rider upon him is visible, but the fresco has become very dark at this place. Below, Viśvantara is shown riding on a spirited horse and Mādrī is carried in a palanquin. The arched neck and the high-stepping action of the horse indicate that the animal is conscious of the dignity of his illustrious rider. There are several attendants in the escort who are equipped with arms. One of them has a dagger in his belt and a curved broadsword in his right hand. This man is wearing a long green coat (Plate XXV). There is another retainer, dressed in a white coat, who is walking briskly, as is indicated by the position of his legs. The small nose, thick lips, and woolly hair of this character show him to be an aboriginal. The drawing of the nose of this figure has been corrected by the painter by means of a sharp black outline. By the side of the neck of the horse another figure can be traced which may be that of the groom, but both colours and drawing have become very indistinct at this place. The palanquin is of wood and its top has a conical canopy, while the base is adorned

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with panels containing human figures. Among the palanquin-bearers, the one at the back is of a strongly built physique, but his forehead is shaved or bald and there is hair only on the back part of his head. The bearer on the corresponding side (right) has a rich crop of hair on his head. The difference shows the artist's love of variety in depicting the various characters in his scenes. The features of the other bearers of the palanquin are not clear in the original fresco. Mādrī is sitting in a graceful manner, leaning on a pillow inside the palanquin.

Farther towards the right is the *Abhisheka* scene which is described in the *Jātaka* in the following words:

"The Bodhisat, who had been desirous of resuming his royal status but had refrained from saying so in order to inspire respect, now agreed, whereupon the sixty thousand courtiers, his birth-mates, cried out:

"Tis time to wash, O mighty King—wash off the dust and dirt!"

Then they attended to his hair and beard, and poured over him the water of consecration, while he shone in all his magnificence like the King of the gods. So it is said:

"Then did the King Vessantara wash off the dust and the dirt".

In the painting Viśvantara is shown sitting on a throne and two attendants are pouring consecrated water over his head. The figures of these attendants have become dim in the fresco. Near by are the figures of two maids with fly-whisks in their hands; their figures also are more or less indistinct although the features of the maid on the left can be made out, and her style of dressing the hair is very effective. She has arranged it in the form of a knot inclined on one side of her crown, and decorated it with ornaments and ribbons. Below the latter maid there is another holding a tray on which bottles of fancy shapes are placed, apparently containing oils, scents, and other articles of toilet. The coiffure of this maid also is very attractive (Plate XXI d). Lower down, near the throne, are two dwarfs with long bodies and short legs. Their features are coarse; one of them has a ruddy complexion, while the other is dark. Above the maid holding the toilet-tray can be traced the figure of another lady, who has brought offerings to the king.

To the right of the *Abhisheka* scene the artist has painted another incident in which Viśvantara is shown sitting on a throne, with one of his legs placed on the throne and the other resting on the ground. He is in religious meditation and has made a loop (*chakra*) with the fingers of his right hand. There are two attendants squatting on the floor in front of the throne. The features of the attendant on the left side are coarse, and he is wearing a white skull-cap. Behind Viśvantara on either side of the throne is a maid holding a fly-whisk. The figure of the maid on the right side is obliterated, but that on the left side is intact. There was another figure behind that of Viśvantara, whose bust is visible to the left of the *chaurī*-bearer mentioned above.

To the right of the throne a lady very beautifully dressed can be seen. She may be Mādrī, but the fresco being extremely indistinct the identification is not certain.

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In painting this *jātaka*, although the artist has displayed his skill chiefly in the portrayal of Jūjaka the greedy Brahman, yet his conception of feminine grace and elegance as shown in the various representations of Mādrī and some of the maids is no less remarkable. Equally striking is his sensitiveness in the delineation of the leaves of trees and aquatic plants and his appreciation of the beauty of the plumage and forms of birds.

### FIGURES OF A *YAKSHA* AND *YAKSHINĪ* AND *APSARASAS* (?)

Plate XXVII *a–b*

*These figures are painted on the pilaster between the left and back corridors in Cave XVII.*

THE painting is considerably damaged, yet in the lower part of the pilaster the figure of a *yaksha* or prince can easily be made out. He is wearing rich jewellery, and his hair also is ornamented with ribbons, the ends of which may be noticed drawn as if flying in the air behind his neck. The *yaksha* has a plump face, but his features are well defined and the eyes suggest composure of mind. The complexion is dark brown. To the right of the *yaksha* is a female figure, probably representing his consort (the *yakshinī*). She is of short stature, and her features also are somewhat dumpy, with short, thick nose and prominent nostrils, thick lips, and round, bulging eyes. In the front of her head-ornament there is a small knob. The lower part of her body is not clear in the fresco, but the upper part can be easily made out, and she is looking up at the *yaksha*, who has brought an offering of white lotus-flowers in a leaf tray for presentation to the Buddha (Plate XXVII *a*).

Above, two more figures may be noticed, one of a woman (? *apsaras*) and another of a man (*arhat*). The woman has a string of pearls round her neck, and her hair also is bedecked with pearls and flowers. The position of her right hand is not clear in the painting, but she holds a full-blown lotus in her left. The *arhat* in front of her is also wearing elaborate jewellery, among which his large wheel-pattern ear-rings are particularly striking. He has made a gesture with the fingers of his right hand in which he has raised his forefinger and separated it as well as the thumb from the three other fingers (XXVII *b*). He is looking at the *apsaras* in an appealing manner.

## THE *MAHĀKAPI JĀTAKA* II, OR THE STORY OF THE BENEVOLENT MONKEY

### Plate XXIX a

*The jātaka is painted on the left wall of the back corridor, to the left of the cell-door in Cave XVII.<sup>1</sup>*

THE artist has painted the *jātaka* in a forest-scene with a variety of typical Indian trees, among which the *palāsa* with its twisted conical blossom and the teak with its broad dark-green leaves are prominent. Some trees are laden with fruit; notice the one near the bottom of the painting, above the pair of deer. Among the denizens of the forest, beside a brown monkey of a large species (which forms the chief character of the story), deer and even a tiger may be seen. The tiger holds in his jaws the head of an ox. Lower down, the carcass of a buffalo may also be noticed. The only representation of birds is a pair of peafowl, sitting at the top of the hill. The female bird has stretched its neck towards its mate in an amorous mood.

The story as delineated in the fresco begins from the right bottom corner, where a man (the Brahman), who is naked down to his waist, may be noticed sitting on a tree laden with fruit. The features of the Brahman are too indistinct to be judged, but the gesture which he has made with the fingers of his hands may suggest that he has noticed some danger, perhaps the deep abyss just below the tree, and being seized with panic he falls down into the abyss. A little to the left, by the side of the *palāsa*-tree, the Brahman may be noticed on the back of a big monkey, the position of whose forelegs indicates that he is climbing up a precipice. Farther towards the left the monkey may be seen again: he is no longer carrying the Brahman, who is seen behind him. A little higher up the monkey is shown sleeping under the shade of a tree, and a dark man (the Brahman) is about to hurl a large stone at his head, which tallies with the *Jātaka* version that the Brahman tried to split open the head of the monkey while he was asleep. To the right of this incident the monkey may be seen again, and this time in such a pose as to show that he became aware of the evil intention of the Brahman and jumped quickly aside so as to be beyond the striking distance of the stone which was hurled at him.

In the left top corner, the monkey and the Brahman appear once more, the Brahman evidently in an apologetic attitude and the monkey no longer very friendly on account of

<sup>1</sup> A summary of the story as told in the *Jātaka* (v, 38–41) is as follows: Once, a Brahman farmer in a village in Kāśī after ploughing his fields unyoked his oxen and began to do some other work. The oxen strayed little by little and escaped into the forest. The Brahman as day declined looked round for his oxen, and in searching for them wandered into the forest and lost his way. He remained without food for several days, and finally, when he found a fruit-tree he fell down into a deep pit in trying to get at the fruit. At that time the Bodhisattva, who was living in the forest as a monkey, noticed the Brahman's predica-

ment and rescued him. Later, when the benevolent monkey was asleep, the ungrateful Brahman tried to split open his head with a large stone. But the Great Being sprang up and perched on a tree, and bearing no malice towards the Brahman showed him the way out of the forest and disappeared. The Brahman because of his sin against the Great Being was afflicted with leprosy. See also *Jātaka-mālā*, No. 49, and Chavannes, *Cinq Gens Contes et apologues extraits du Tripitaka Chinois et traduits en français*, No. 47.

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the misbehaviour of the Brahman. In this episode the monkey is showing the Brahman the way out of the forest. There is a pair of deer in front of the monkey who appear to be friendly with him, because they are also noticed looking at the monkey near the bottom of the fresco, where he had shaken the Brahman from his back. In this scene the deer, as is indicated by their raised necks and wild stare, show their disapproval of the ungrateful character of the Brahman.

Apart from the religious interest of the painting, the figure of the monkey has been shown in some characteristic poses, sitting on his haunches with legs doubled up or stretched out, walking gently on all fours, and curving the body in making a spring to keep out of danger. The short soft hair on his forelegs and forehead are painted with most delicate brushwork.

### THE *SUTASOMA JĀTAKA*, OR THE STORY OF THE PIOUS KING OF INDRAPIRASTHA PREVAILING UPON SAUDĀSA THE KING OF BENARES TO GIVE UP CANNIBALISM

Plates XXVIIc—XXXVII

*The several episodes of the story are painted on the wall of the back corridor, to the left of the antechamber, and are continued on the bend of the wall towards the left, above the cell-door, in Cave XVII.*

THE painting was identified for the first time in 1920 by Foucher, who got the clue from the incident that a lioness was enamoured of the beauty of a prince whom she found sleeping under a tree, and by licking the soles of his feet became pregnant. The offspring of this extraordinary love, when born, was reared and trained as a prince, but ultimately, through his natural predilections, turned out to be a cannibal. In the *Jātaka*, however, a different version of the cannibalistic tendencies of the prince is given, that is, 'as a yakkha in the birth immediately preceding this, he had eaten quantities of human flesh, and so it was agreeable to his taste'.<sup>1</sup> The story delineated on the rock-wall at Ajanta is no doubt more romantic in feeling, and the artist, in his love for detail, has spread it over several scenes, using his imagination and skill to the full.

To begin the story as it is painted, one should look at the scene between cell-doors 1 and 2, where the King of Benares is shown going out for a hunt. The gate of the palace from which the king has emerged with his retinue is shown at the extreme right side of the fresco. He is accompanied by two other princes, one of whom is riding on a green (steel-grey) horse and the other on a bay animal. The king himself is in front and his steed is of a milk-white colour. An attendant is holding an umbrella over his head. The drawing of the legs of the king's horse shows that the animal is going at a gallop. The bay and the steel-grey horses are bedecked with ornaments and their harness is also of a rich quality, being of white and black

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, v, 248. Also see *Jātaka-māla*, No. 31, and *Bhadrakalpavivadāna*, No. 34.

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leather, with the colours arranged alternately. The bay horse has an ornament on his breast from which bells and crescents are shown hanging. The steel-grey horse has a decorative band round his forehead. There are five footmen to the right of the king's horse, three of whom hold spears. Two more footmen are to be seen on the left who are armed with swords and shields. The artist has given different casts of feature to these footmen; for instance, notice the nose and the cut of the face of the footman in front, to the left of the king. He is unmistakably an aboriginal.

In front of the party are shown three hunters with a pack of dogs, five of whom have been slipped from their leashes to follow a herd of deer. The leashes with hooks may be noticed in the hands of the hunters. The figures of the dogs are painted in a very poor style, particularly when compared with the figures of the horses and the deer. The reason is that the representation of horses and deer had become easy for the artist by long practice, whereas the dog was not a popular animal to draw, and, further, the variety of feature resulting from differences of breed perhaps made it difficult to decide on a simple appropriate style typical of this beast.

The king in pursuing the deer has become separated from his retinue and has entered a forest abounding in wild animals. The drawing of the trees, although conventional to a degree, is nevertheless artistic, and the trunks, the branches, the leaves, and the flowers all combine to present a delightful picture. The nimble movement of the deer and the wild stare of their eyes when they scent danger is effectively shown (Plate XXVIII *a*). A little above the deer, which are scattered in different directions, some foxes, a wild cat, and also a jackal may be noticed. Higher still, two panthers are shown lurking amidst the ledges of the hill, and, probably at the sight of one of them, a stag has been struck with fear and has opened his mouth as if to bay. The head of the stag is a little damaged, but the representation of his body exhibits a close study of the contours of this animal and marvellous skill in drawing it so faithfully.

The forest-scene continues above, but the artist, to separate the events enacted so far from those which are to follow, has cleverly inserted a belt of hills in the painting so that the on-looker may easily understand that a fresh episode is to begin there. The king, being exhausted by fatigue, has lain down under a tree and fallen asleep. His sword and belt may be seen by his side. A lioness has approached the king with signs of affection and is licking the soles of his feet. The king's horse is watching the event in wild terror. The figure of the horse is a masterpiece of drawing, representing faithfully the fright of the horse by its raised neck, expanded nostrils, and exposed teeth (Plate XXX *a*).

A little above there is another scene, again separated from the last by a belt of hills. Here the king is shown sitting on a stone in a mood indicating lassitude. He has stretched out his right arm for support to the stone on which he is sitting and with the fingers of his other hand has made a gesture which reveals the perplexity of his mind at the situation. The lioness is in front of him, but her position here again indicates her affection for him and her desire for marital union. She has turned her neck and is looking eagerly towards the king. Amidst the forest the artist has laid out a water-pool and covered its surface with lotus-flowers. The

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variety in the shapes of the leaves of the trees depicted in this scene and the elegance of the flowers show the artist's delight in the beauty of Nature.

The next scene (Plate XXXV *a-b*) represents the lioness proceeding to the king's palace after passing through a bazaar. At the left side of the fresco a gate may be seen through which the lioness has evidently entered the bazaar.<sup>1</sup> There are four men and two boys near the gate; only one of them is armed with a sword and shield,<sup>2</sup> and the others, including the boys, are pedestrians, and are looking with curiosity at the lioness. She is shown walking proudly in the middle of the road. The man nearest the gate has a child on his shoulders who is also looking at the lioness with wonder. For the arrival of the lioness special preparations seem to have been made, for the path is strewn with flowers and there is a line of flags on one side of the road. The figures painted at the left side of the bazaar represent six men and four women. The features of all of them are Dravidian, which shows that the people of this stock constituted the major portion of the population of the Deccan at that time. Both men and women have bedecked their hair with flowers, but the coiffure of the ladies is very elaborate and artistic. The fourth lady from the right side has a child with her. The gestures made by both men and women indicate their astonishment at the sight of the lioness, who is carrying a child on her back. These men and women are apparently watching the lioness from the roofs of their houses, because the leaves of the arecca-nut and other trees at their back show that they are quite high above the ground.

On the other side of the road the painter has shown a row of shops with empty spaces between them, indicating the openings of narrow lanes upon the road. From these openings boys, girls, and grown-up people are watching the scene. In the shops half-clad tradesmen with unkempt hair and coarse features are visible. They have round and flat vessels in front and around them, in which articles for sale are shown. In front of the lioness, on the right side of the reproduction (Plate XXXV *a*), is a tall male figure with a long staff in his hand. He is probably the usher of the court, but the gesture made by him with the fingers of his right hand suggests surprise at the approach of the lioness with the child.

The next scene represents the royal court; the king is sitting on the throne with a child in his lap and the lioness stands in front of him. Behind the lioness, towards the left, are two figures, one probably representing the minister, who is seated on a low chair, and the other an attendant dressed in a white coat. The latter has a brown complexion. There are two female *chaurī*-bearers one on each side of the throne, and there is also a maid-servant immediately behind the king's throne, holding a pot of milk which she has brought to feed the child. Close to the *chaurī*-bearer, on the left side of the king, two ladies may also be noticed who are looking curiously at the lioness and the child.

Below the courtroom, in the foreground, is a stalwart figure dressed in white and holding a sword under his left arm. He is probably the chief guard of the royal court. To his left there are three more guards, all armed with shields and long swords. The casts of the features of these three figures differ; one appears to be a Dravidian, another a Maratha, and

<sup>1</sup> On the wall of the gateway the figure of a monkey is painted.

<sup>2</sup> The sword is straight and of a large size (Plate XXXV *a*).

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the third an Oriya. The Maratha has a beard and a moustache, while his hair is dressed up like that of a *yogī*. The complexions of these guards also vary; one is fair, another brownish, and the third greenish (dark). To the left of the guard is a priest (?) sitting on a cushion placed on the floor. There are two other figures, sitting on the ground to the right of the guards. The heads of these figures are well preserved and the high lights placed on their faces show with advantage the salient features of each. One of them, who is of a dark complexion and is dressed in white, holds in his lap a round metal box with chased work.

The fresco has become black and indistinct, particularly in its upper part, but the poses and arrangement of the different figures and the general effect of the entire scene exhibit the artist's ingenuity and clever craftsmanship.

The name of the King of Benares, the hero of the lioness's romance, was Sudāsa, and the child born of this extraordinary love-adventure was named Saudāsa. The artist of Ajanta has depicted the next incident of the life-story of the prince Saudāsa by showing him learning his three Rs, with another boy of his age, from a teacher attached to the palace-staff. The fresco is damaged and the figure of the teacher which was at the right end of a pillared room, has almost disappeared, only his feet being visible (Plate XXXVII a). The figure of Saudāsa behind a pillar is intact, and he holds in his lap a wooden tablet on which he is writing his lessons. The representation of the companion of Saudāsa is damaged in its upper part, but the lower part is fully preserved, and the boy, like Saudāsa, also holds a wooden tablet in his lap. The boys were perhaps taught to play on musical instruments as well, or the teacher himself was fond of playing on a *vīṇā*, because that instrument is seen hung on the wall between two pillars, a little above the head of Saudāsa. The *vīṇā* is represented in a more or less perfect form, with six keys to adjust the six wires and a bridge in the middle of its oval-shaped bowl, so that the wires should not stick to the wooden frame of the instrument (Plate XXXVII a).

To the left of this scene is another representing the prince Saudāsa practising the throwing of the javelin. A dark boy holding several javelins is sitting on the ground near the prince to give him another weapon when he has thrown the one in his hand. The target, representing two human skulls, is attached to a frame placed below a banana-tree. Two javelins have hit the target (Plate XXXVII a). The method of throwing the weapon and the pose of the body to be adopted in practising it are interesting. Behind the prince is a heavy greenish (dark) figure sitting on a chair. He is probably the teacher of military exercises. There are two attendants in the background, one of whom holds a tray of refreshments for the prince.

The idea that Saudāsa has grown up and become fit to take up the reins of government from his father is shown by the *Abhisheka* ceremony which is performed at the time of the enthronement of a prince. A spacious *shāmiyāna* (rectangular tent) has been set up for the ceremony in the gardens of the palace. The lofty bamboo props and the triangular decorative fringe of the *shāmiyāna* may interest students of royal paraphernalia in ancient times. Two attendants are pouring consecrated water on the head of Saudāsa, who is seated on a chair. The hair of the attendant on the left is adorned with a large flower. Near this attendant is a maid-servant, who holds a fly-whisk in her hand. There are two more attendants behind the

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chair of Saudāsa, but as the fresco is very dark there it cannot be seen clearly whether they hold fly-whisks or trays of offerings in their hands. On the right side, however, two figures are clear, one representing a woman, who holds a large lily-flower in her right hand and a tray of fruit (?) on the palm of her left hand, which she is holding up. A little lower, on the same side, is a dwarf, who has brought flowers arranged in a tray to offer Saudāsa on this auspicious occasion. On the corresponding side, to the left of Saudāsa's chair, there are figures of dwarfs and men and women who have brought similar offerings for him. The features of many figures represented in this scene will interest students of Indian racial types, since inter-racial marriage had not, perhaps, by that time (fifth century A.D.) continued long enough to efface the characteristic features of the original stocks.

According to the *Jātaka* Saudāsa was fond of eating meat from his childhood, and when he became king he 'never ate his rice meal without meat'. One day, through the carelessness of the cook, the meat reserved for the king's table was eaten by the palace dogs. The cook went out to purchase a fresh supply, but not being able to do so he was seized with fear. 'If I should serve a meal without meat, I am a dead man. What am I to do?' To save his own life the cook went to a cemetery and cut off a piece of flesh from the thigh of a man who had died a short time before. The cook roasted the meat and served it up to the king. He relished the dish immensely and inquired of the cook, 'What meat is it?' The cook hesitated to tell the truth, but when the king insisted and promised not to punish him he related the whole affair. The king ordered him to be silent about the matter, and in future always to serve him human flesh. The cook was frightened by this order; but the king consoled him and suggested that he could secure the supply from 'the numbers of men in prison', or by capturing men on the pretext that they were thieves.<sup>1</sup>

The painter, in order to bring home the carnivorous tendency of the king, born of a man and a lioness, has delineated three scenes at Ajanta, showing the cutting off of human flesh from an impaled victim, the cooking of the flesh in the royal kitchen, and its serving up to the king in his dining-room. The first scene is found on the rock-wall between the 'proceeding of the lioness to the royal palace' and the *Abhisheka*, described above. It is a gruesome interlude. A man is shown impaled with a spear which has passed through his chest and back, and another person (? butcher) is cutting off pieces of flesh from his hip with a knife (Plate XXVI a). A servant, shown behind the butcher, is taking the pieces of flesh to the kitchen, shown above. The kitchen is a plain structure with four wooden columns and a grass roof resting on a bamboo framework. Inside the kitchen several pots may be seen hung from the timber of the roof with slings. They apparently contain oil, *ghee* (clarified butter), honey, pickles, and condiments. Some vessels are on the fire, and the cook, whose face is kept by the artist turned towards the bazaar through which the lioness is passing, evidently wants to suggest that his cooking of the human flesh is the result of the unnatural union of Saudāsa's parents. The cook, while looking towards the bazaar scene, is also pointing out with his forefinger the two vessels in which the flesh is being cooked.

Higher up is the royal dining-room with the pantry attached to it, towards the left. The

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, v, 247-8.

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dining-room is a pillared building with a flat roof and an open court, at the end of which areca-nut or palm-trees are growing. In the pantry a servant with beard and moustache and coarse features is shown sitting. In front of him are six vessels, four piled one above the other in one place and two similarly arranged in another place. At the top of the latter pile is a tray containing fruit (?). Near by, a small pile of greenstuff (? salad) may also be noticed. Behind the pillar, set between the dining-room and the pantry, another servant may be seen who is serving dishes from the pantry to the king's table. The king is sitting on a low chair, and he has a small circular table in front of him upon which cups and small plates are arranged. Some vessels may be seen around the table as well. Two attendants are standing behind the chair who probably hold fly-whisks. There are some figures to the right of the table also, but as the colours have faded and the drawing also is indistinct, they cannot be identified in the reproduction.<sup>1</sup>

Below the dining-room, near the steps, there are two figures, one of whom may represent the cook, whose presence, according to custom, may be necessary to ascertain that the king has relished the dishes cooked by him, or to receive instructions regarding the next meal. There is another servant to the left of the steps who may also be attached to the kitchen, because he is pointing with his finger to a certain dish placed on the table before the king. It may be the human flesh, the favourite dish of the king. These scenes, when eliminated from the association of procuring, cooking, serving, and eating human flesh, are interesting as showing some aspects of the court-life of the time (fifth century A.D.) when this fresco was painted.<sup>2</sup>

To increase the interest of the story the painter has delineated two more scenes showing the resentment of the people at the slaughter of human beings, and their protest to the king against his cannibalism. To begin with the first scene, a row of houses with pillared porticoes<sup>3</sup> can be made out in the background. In front of the houses there is probably a road, in the middle of which a man is shown tied to a wooden frame (press); he is perhaps to be slaughtered for the royal kitchen. There are four men around him, one of whom is armed with a sword and has an ornamental band tied round his head. He appears to be a palace-servant, deputed to kill the man placed in the press. His left hand is placed on the back of the victim and the right arm is raised up to strike the blow. A man on the right is pulling back the palace-servant to deter him from striking. Two more men, who are by the side and in front of the victim, are also warning the palace-servant, as is shown by the gestures of their fingers. By the opportune help of these people the victim appears to have been released, because, a little to the left, he is seen being led by the two men who were by his side and in front when he was tied to the frame. The gait of the victim indicates that his back has become stiff owing to his remaining in the press for a long time. His long-drawn face and pallor are worthy of notice.

<sup>1</sup> In the original fresco the figures of two maids can, however, be traced, one of whom holds a fan with a long stick. The shape of the brassière is worthy of notice. The other maid has stooped down to present a dish with a conical lid to the king.

<sup>2</sup> The subject is discussed in the Introductory Remarks, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> The rooms have windows in the front wall to admit light and air. The openings of the windows are fitted with screens of carved woodwork (Plate XXXIII b).

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The next scene shows King Saudāsa sitting in a pavilion of the royal palace. He appears to be in a state of perplexity, as is indicated by the expression of his face as well as by the gesture of his hand. Two maids holding fly-whisks are standing behind his chair; one of them is of a ruddy complexion and the other is dark. The features and the poses of these maids are extremely graceful (Plate XXXIV), and the artist's love of detail is shown in the red tint of the corners of their eyes. Their faces, however, show feelings of consternation. To the right of Saudāsa two more ladies are represented whose figures are damaged in the fresco, but the gestures made by their hands again suggest sorrow and dismay.

In front of Saudāsa is the minister, seated on a low chair, who is listening to the complaint which is being made by a man kneeling before him. To show his respect to the minister he has joined his hands and stretched them towards the minister. There is a dish containing something (?human flesh) in front of the figure making supplication. There is another figure immediately behind him. These two may represent the cook and the victim who was to be slaughtered and was afterwards released. Above the kneeling figure who has made the complaint is the chief guard of the court, who is dressed in a long white coat and holds a long staff in his hand. To the left of the guard are probably the two men who helped in the release of the victim in the last scene, and who have brought him for justice to the royal court. Close to these two men, on the left side, is a soldier dressed in a white jacket and armed with a sword, which he has placed on his shoulder. He also has a tray in his hand, probably containing human flesh, to supply a further proof of the cannibalism of the king. According to the legend, Kālahatthi, the Commander-in-Chief, gave orders to his officers to trace out and capture 'the man-eating robber'.<sup>1</sup> The soldier shown in the painting may therefore be identified with one of the officers deputed by Kālahatthi to investigate the affair.

Farther towards the left are some more men, probably those who have lost their relatives and dear ones by the cruel acts of the cook in serving human flesh to the king. They also have come to the palace to seek justice. They are dressed like mendicants and one of them holds a water-bottle in his hand. There is another man, to the right of the king's chair, who may be a servant of the kitchen acquainted with the secret of the cannibalism of the king. He is rubbing his hands nervously as if in fear.

Another interesting feature of this part of the fresco is the representation of the stables, which may be noticed above the royal court where people have assembled for justice. The stables have a low wall in front, reaching up to the chests of the horses. On this wall pillars have been built up which support the roof. Inside the stables saddles may be noticed, placed on pegs fixed into the wall. The saddles in their shape do not differ much from the saddles of the present day. The heads of four horses are visible; one is silver-grey, another chestnut, another bay, and the fourth white. Their finely shaped heads show that they are highly bred.

According to the *Jātaka*, Kālahatthi, the Commander-in-Chief, argued with the king regarding the evil consequences of eating human flesh, but his words fell on deaf ears and the king chose to depart from the kingdom rather than give up 'eating man's flesh'.<sup>2</sup> The scene

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, v, 249.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 249-57.

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of the departure of Saudāsa, as painted at Ajanta, shows that the army, including elephant-riders, horsemen, and infantry, have come out to fight him, but he, with his inborn lion-like courage, is combating them with a sword in his hand, with which he is cutting down his opponents like a 'growth of reeds'. The scene is shown in Plate XXXVII b, below that in which Saudāsa as a young boy was represented practising the throwing of the javelin. He is shown standing in the pillared portico of the royal palace, his pose, and the fact that he holds a long unsheathed sword in his right hand and a round shield in his left, indicating that he is ready to make the attack. Some ladies of the palace, to be seen on the right side of Saudāsa, are watching the incident. Lower down, the injured bodies of two soldiers, who were armed with swords, are lying on the ground. The position of one of them, who is dressed in a white coat, shows graphically how he fell down after being wounded. Another stalwart soldier, to the left of the last, has covered his face with a large rectangular shield to save himself from the stroke of Saudāsa's sword. There are five more soldiers, armed with swords and shields, who have come quite close to Saudāsa with the intention of capturing or killing him. The wild glare of their eyes indicates their fury. One of them at the back has his teeth exposed in rage. He has a sharp curved sword in his hand, while his long hair, which is spread over his shoulders, is tied near the forehead with an ornamental band, showing his superior rank in the army. This soldier has also a beard.

In the lower part of the fresco, on the right side, three horsemen may be seen, riding on bay, grey, and white animals. They appear to be officers. One of them in the middle is dressed in a green coat and holds a large bow in his left hand. He has also a long, straight sword hung by his left side. The saddle-cloth of the horse of this officer is of a check design. By the side and in front of these horsemen are seen footmen, armed with swords, shields, and spears. Above the horsemen are two elephants with princes or noblemen riding on them. The *charkatās* and the *mahāvats* of the elephants may also be seen above them. The figures of the elephants have, as usual, been drawn with much precision and effect. One of the animals is pinkish-white, while the other is dark grey. Farther up, the same elephants may be seen going back, indicating evidently the retreat of the army owing to the panic caused by Saudāsa's extraordinary strength and the deadly nature of his sword-strokes. Behind the elephants some footmen holding flags and armed with swords and shields can also be seen; they are retreating.

Saudāsa, after his departure from his capital (Benares), took up his abode in a forest and became notorious in the country as the 'man-eating robber'. Some episodes connected with Saudāsa's life in the forest are painted near the end of the back wall, and are also continued on the left wall, but as the *Jātaka* version is not closely followed at Ajanta the identification of some of the scenes is not certain.

To begin with the scene painted in the middle of the rock-wall to the left of the first cell-door, there is a lake situated in the middle of a park and surrounded by trees with rich and variegated foliage. At one end of the lake a stalwart man may be seen holding a thick metal rod of chased work in his right hand and bearing a prince with refined features on his shoulders. A little farther towards the right, by the side of steps which descend to the waters of the

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lake, is a reddish creature with ugly teeth and coarse features. He is grinning in an inhuman manner, and his forehead-band, which is set with three black disks, is also intended to suggest his nefarious character. On his right side the same strong man who was carrying a prince on his shoulders appears again. Below, four ladies are swimming in the lake. They have been frightened by the appearance of crocodiles and other water-monsters from the waters of the lake. The head of the monster near the dark lady, at the right end of the lake, is like that of a dog. The pose of this lady admirably conveys the suggestion of terror. Farther down, a royal army comprising elephant-riders, horsemen, and infantry is shown as if marching. Near the bottom of the painting a spirited horse is rearing and plunging, but the rider has not been disconcerted by the unexpected swerving of the animal and is sitting firmly in his saddle.

The events represented in the above scene tally with those given in the *Jātaka*; for example, the red creature with ugly features is evidently the goblin who lived with Saudāsa in the forest for several days and taught him the spell which endowed him with extraordinary 'strength, speed of foot, and increase of prestige'. The stalwart man shown in the painting is apparently Saudāsa himself, and the prince on his shoulders is Sutasoma, the king of Indraprastha, whom the former captured with a view to completing the number of one hundred and one princes who were to be slaughtered in fulfilment of a vow made by him to the tree-spirit. The pool represented in the painting is the royal tank of the Migāchira park, into which Saudāsa, according to the *Jātaka*, descended in order to make a sudden attack on Sutasoma, who was strongly protected by the royal army, composed of elephant-riders, horsemen, and infantry.<sup>1</sup> Further, it is mentioned in the *Jātaka* that when Saudāsa captured Sutasoma, he did not treat him as he did the other princes whom he had captured, and whom he lifted up by their ankles, keeping their heads downwards. On the contrary he showed due respect to Sutasoma and placed him on his shoulders.<sup>2</sup> The coming out of the water-animals from the tank, as shown in the painting, is also supported by the legend which mentions: 'So he (Saudāsa) went down into the tank and stood there, covering his head with a lotus leaf. By reason of his great glory, the fish, tortoises, and the like, fell back and swam about in large bodies at the water's edge.'<sup>3</sup>

The figures which cannot be easily placed within the framework of the text of the *Jātaka* are the inmates of the *shāmiyāna* set up to the right of the royal tank, comprising a king and queen with a maid, who are watching the ladies swimming in the tank. They may be the father and mother of Sutasoma, who may have wished to be present at the ceremonial bath of their son on the day of 'the Phussa conjunction'. The interlude painted to the right of an elephant of Sutasoma's army (Plate XXXI *b*) is more puzzling, because in it again a king is shown seated on a throne with two men in front of him. One of them is sitting on a low chair and the other on a cushion placed on the floor. The king is wearing a high crown and the two men in front of him have black marks on their foreheads, similar to that placed on the forehead of Saudāsa in the above scene (Plate XXXI *a*). The king is talking to these men, probably on a religious subject, and they are listening to his discourse attentively, as is indi-

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, v, 259-60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

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cated by the gestures of their hands. There are two maids holding *chaurīs* behind the king, and a third one may also be noticed between the pillars who is bringing something on a tray to the king. There is another tray, containing apparently a piece of cloth, placed in front of the two men. Who is the king, and who are the two men whom the king wants to convert from their evil professions—indicated by the black marks on their foreheads—by teaching them the Law and by presenting material gifts?

The scene painted below the last (Plate XXXI b), showing a prince and princess with some attendants, may represent Sutasoma's leaving the royal palace to proceed to the Migāchira park in order to bathe in the royal tank there. The figure of the prince is damaged, but those of the princess and attendants are intact and exhibit fine modelling combined with clever decorative skill. Among the attendants there are three maids and a boy. They are carrying vessels and ointments such as the prince (? Sutasoma) would require for his bath.

Above the lake-scene, in the upper part of the wall, the fresco has become darkened through various causes, and hence the incidents painted there are not very clear; yet such figures as can be made out show the retreat of the royal army after Sutasoma's temporary release from the grip of Saudāsa, who allowed him to go to the brahman Nanda, to listen to the four stanzas which were taught to this brahman by the Buddha Kassapa. The retreat of Sutasoma's army must begin from the left wall of the back corridor, since the hind-legs of the elephant which appears at the left side in this Plate (XXXII a) are visible on that wall. Near the trunk of the elephant are four attendants, two of whom are carrying the royal banner and umbrella, whilst the other two are armed with swords and daggers. In front of these attendants there are two more who are proceeding in opposite directions at a rapid pace, as is indicated by the positions of their legs. A little to the right is an areca-nut tree, near which Saudāsa and Sutasoma are seen engaged in conversation. Saudāsa can be identified by the black mark on his forehead and Sutasoma by the royal silver staff of chased work in front of him. Sutasoma is apparently asking the permission of Saudāsa to visit the brahman Nanda in order to listen to 'the four stanzas'.<sup>1</sup> Farther towards the right, amidst trees and boulders, two figures may be seen represented as if climbing up the hill. One of them may be Sutasoma and the other the brahman, who is conducting him to his abode. A little higher up, towards the left, Sutasoma and the brahman are seen again, the latter sitting in an attitude of reverence, with joined hands, in front of Sutasoma. He is reciting the four stanzas, for which he gets the reward of one thousand pieces (? coins of gold) for each verse.<sup>2</sup>

After listening to the Truth contained in 'the four stanzas' Sutasoma, according to the *Jātaka* version, went to his parents to beg them to take up the administration of the kingdom, because he had to keep his promise to go back to 'the man-eater'. The elephant-riders, the

<sup>1</sup> When Sutasoma was proceeding to the Migāchira park, a brahman who had come from Taxila accosted him on the way, and said that four stanzas containing the Truth had been taught to him by the Buddha Kassapa, which he was eager to recite before Sutasoma. The latter was pleased with what the brahman said, but told him that he could not turn back at that moment to listen to the stanzas, but

asked his councillors to look after the brahman. Afterwards, when Saudāsa had captured Sutasoma, the prince told 'the man-eater' of the visit of the brahman, and explained his keen desire to listen to the stanzas. Saudāsa at first did not believe his victim, but when Sutasoma pledged his honour as a Kshatriya to return, Saudāsa let him go. Cf. *Jātaka*, v, 259 ff.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 263-4.

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horsemen, and the footmen painted on the right side of the hermitage where Sutasoma met the brahman represent the march of the royal army towards the city-gate, which is visible at the right end of the fresco (Plate XXXII *b*). Sutasoma himself is riding on a spirited horse, and can be easily recognized by the royal umbrella over his head. An officer wearing a peaked cap is riding by his side. His horse is going at a gallop. Behind, there is another officer riding on a bay horse and holding a banner in his hand. Behind the horses is a line of elephants moving side by side and forming a solid mass. The footmen are marching in front and they are armed with swords.

On the left wall of the back corridor the artist has painted with much effect the assemblage of the entire army which had come for the protection of Sutasoma. The four 'arms' of the army, that is, the elephant-riders, the charioteers, the horsemen, and the footmen mentioned in the *Jātaka*, are all portrayed there.<sup>1</sup> The subject appears to be a battle-scene, because in the tumult which arose at the capture of Sutasoma by Saudāsa the different units of the army began to attack each other. The rapid movement of the horses, the archers stretching the strings of their bows to the full length, the warriors brandishing their swords, the galloping of the horses of the chariots and their wheeling round, and the heavy trot of the elephants all suggest intense commotion, which the artist has most graphically expressed in the painting (Plates XXVII *c* and XXVIII).

To describe the subject: if a beginning be made from the left bottom corner, a high officer is seen coming at full gallop on a bay horse. He is met by two other officers who have been proceeding from the opposite direction at a still faster speed, since as the result of being suddenly reined in the horse of one rider is rearing up with his forelegs in the air while the steed of the other has turned his neck on one side in arresting his forward movement in obedience to the curb. These two officers have evidently come to receive instructions from the other. The accoutrements of these three officers, striped socks and peaked fur-brimmed caps (helmets), are interesting, since they show influence coming from Western Asiatic countries.

Behind, towards the right, there are two more horses, and the rider of one of them has turned his animal round in order to direct a company of soldiers armed with swords and shields. A little above, some archers may be noticed who are shooting arrows from their bows. In the middle of the painting is a team of four horses pulling a chariot at a gallop. The fresco being damaged above, the body of the chariot cannot be discerned, but the figure of the driver can be traced. In front of the horses are some soldiers, each with a differently coloured skin, the artist's object being to suggest that the army consisted of units raised from people of various races. One of these soldiers, of a pale hue, wears a steel breast-plate, showing that the armourer's craft already existed at the time when the subject was painted (fifth century). The blue colour of the curved swords also suggests that they, too, are of tempered steel.

In the original fresco another chariot can be described, depicted a little above the last. Between the two chariots and above them soldiers armed with swords are visible. Higher still, a tree with the heads of two men amidst its branches may be noticed. These men may

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, v, 265, n. 1.

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be two of the one hundred and one princes captured by Saudāsa to be slaughtered as an offering to the tree-spirit.<sup>1</sup>

Returning to the lower part of the fresco, three officers may be noticed, riding on horses and coming towards the officer who had turned his horse to direct the company of soldiers to his right. The soldiers are showing much activity: one is balancing his spear, some are brandishing their swords, and the positions of their legs suggest rapid movement. Above the company of swordsmen a party of archers may be noticed who are discharging arrows from their bows. One of the archers, perhaps the chief of the party, is again wearing steel armour. A little higher are two chariots opposite one another. A figure in the chariot on the left is shooting an arrow at the occupants of the other chariot. A man in this second chariot has raised his hand, either to show his helplessness or in token of surrender. A soldier below this chariot has been shown pierced in the head by a long sword. Six warriors can be seen at this point, but the rearward movement of the elephants shown at the top suggests that the army is retreating.

The fresco, although much blackened by climatic and other causes, presents clearly the tumult and frenzy of a battle-scene, the different types of arms used in those days, and the methods of manœuvring of the army; it may therefore be of interest to students of contemporary military equipment and the tactics of war practised at the time.

Below this scene, on the right side of the cell-door (Plate XXIX b), the artist has painted a minor event of the *Jātaka*, namely Sutasoma's visit, after his temporary release from the grip of Saudāsa, to the house where the brahman, who was to recite 'the four stanzas' to him, was put up by his councillors at his instance.<sup>2</sup> Sutasoma is shown riding on a white horse, the portrayal of both rider and horse being very realistic. Sutasoma is dressed in a green coat and wears sandals, the straps of which are tied round his ankles. A straight sword hangs from his belt at his left side. An attendant is holding an umbrella over his head. The figure of the horse is a clever piece of drawing, showing the slender limbs of the animal, with a suggestion of movement indicated by the position of his forelegs. A groom with long curled hair may be seen behind the horse. Sutasoma is attended by an officer who has dismounted, but his horse, a grey animal, may be seen close to Sutasoma's steed. There is a belt of hills in the background and also a tree with large leaves—a banyan or teak. There is another tree in the foreground which appears to be a mango.

Below are several huts, one of them being prominent on account of its open façade. The roof of this hut slopes on two sides, and is covered with matting at the top. Below, the framework is of bamboo, but the main props and cross-beams of the hut are of timber. Several pots are shown hung in a sling (Plate XXIX b). A woman is standing in front of the hut, and her child has clasped her for protection through fear of an old mendicant who is saying something to the woman. The figure of the mendicant is mutilated, but his wild stare is terrifying. He has a small pot hung from a sling in his right hand, and a long staff in his left.

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, v, 258.

<sup>2</sup> 'And with these words he (Sutasoma) commanded his councillors, saying "Go ye and in a certain house of a brah-

man prepare a couch, and arrange a dining place under cover'.' *Jātaka*, v, 260.

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There are swine and oxen in the yard of the hut, and the entire scene is typical of Indian country life, which has undergone very little change since this subject was painted.

## THE BUDDHA PREACHING IN THE TUSHITA HEAVEN, WITH TWO OTHER SCENES

*Plates XXXVIII–XL a*

*The scenes are painted on the left wall of the antechamber in Cave XVII.*

THE miracle of the Buddha's going up to the Heaven of the Thirty-three and discoursing upon 'transcendental doctrine' to the gods, and afterwards his return to 'the world of men' by a ladder made for him at the instance of Sakka (Indra), and finally the Buddha's testing the wisdom of the Elder Sāriputta by putting more and more difficult questions to him one after another, and declaring the Law to the assembly, which comprised thirty crores of beings, is described in detail in the Introduction to *Jātaka* 489.<sup>1</sup> There is also a myth that the Buddha after his Enlightenment went up to the Tushita Heaven to teach the Doctrine to his mother, who was there. The artist of Ajanta evidently had this myth also in his mind, since in painting the first scene in which the Buddha is shown preaching the Law in Heaven the artist has given special prominence to a group of *devīs*.

The subject is painted at the top of the fresco, and although the portion near the ceiling has become very dark, the group of *devīs* is fairly clear; and the figures of the Buddha and his attendants and of the heavenly beings floating in the space above him, and of the *devas* who have assembled on the right side to listen to his discourse, can also be made out. The representation of the Buddha is conventional; he is shown wearing a robe, and seated on a throne ornamented with chased metal-work or wood-carving. There are two attendants beside his throne, the Bodhisattvas Padmapāṇi and Vajrapāṇi, who can be identified by their respective symbols. Above the throne on the right side an *arhat* or some other heavenly being is floating in space, while on the corresponding side a smaller celestial being (? *gāna*) may be noticed. In front of the throne on the left is a *bhikshu* who has knelt down in the act of adoration. On the right side is a small figure with a broad belt round his waist who has prostrated himself to show his deep reverence for the Great Being.

The group of *devīs* painted on the left includes ten figures; the mother of the Buddha, Mahāmāyā, is probably the figure in front, close to the throne. She is dressed in a garment of striped material, but the painting being indistinct at this place, her face cannot be made out. The features of the other *devīs* are very pleasing, and the artist, to show their beauty to advantage, has placed high lights on their foreheads, noses, lips, and chins (Plate XXXVIII and XL a). The pose and the expression of the face of the *devī* next to Mahāmāyā, on the left, is

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, iv, 166–9.

PLATES XXXVIII-XL<sup>a</sup>

particularly striking. The attitude of another *devī*, shown in the foreground, and the way in which she is looking at the Buddha, are specially distinctive. In painting two *devīs* of the group the artist apparently had in mind the dress and physiognomy of Parthian women, whose number would not have been small in the Deccan and the provinces adjoining it on the north and the west, owing to the rule of the princes of Śaka origin, styled the Western Satraps in history, over Mahārāshtra and Malwa up to the fourth century A.D. One of these *devīs*, at the top, on the left side, is wearing an embroidered head-dress to which is attached a veil of white gauze such as is worn by brides in European countries. She has also an ornamental band round her forehead, from which either precious gems are hanging in the form of drops, or else her hair has been dressed in clusters so as to assume the same form. The head-ornaments of the other *devī* of this couple are also worthy of notice. Both of them are of a very fair complexion, while the other *devīs* of the group are either swarthy or quite dark.

On the right side the fresco is considerably damaged, but five figures representing gods may be made out, two of whom can be easily identified—Indra by the third eye in his forehead, and Brahma by his plaited hair dressed like that of a *yogī*. A little below, two more figures may be traced, one of a *deva* dressed in a striped robe and seated on a cushion, and another of a celestial being floating above the earth, although he has evidently entered the divine court through the gate on the right side, half of his body being inside the court and half in the gate and beyond. Near the jamb of the gate another figure may be descried, kneeling low towards the ground.

The second scene, representing the descent of the Buddha from heaven, is painted in the middle of the fresco (Plates XXXVIII and XXXIX). The celestial ladder of the *Jātaka* is represented by five steps, which are not one above the other but are arranged sideways, one step being in the middle and two on each side of it. The Buddha is dressed in an orange robe, and his right hand is lowered towards the earth in the *Bhūsparsa mudrā*. He is represented as emaciated, and this is doubtless because it is related that before his Enlightenment Gotama kept fasts and underwent other austerities. There are nine divinities around him, who are either wearing crowns or have their hair plaited and dressed in the shape of a crown. Two of these are holding fly-whisks and may be identified as the Bodhisattvas Padmapāṇi and Vajrapāṇi. Of the remaining seven figures one surely represents Indra, since he is wearing a high bejewelled crown and his third eye of omniscience is visible in his forehead. The corresponding figure on the right side may be that of Brahma, for his hair is plaited in the style of the hair of the *yogīs*. The remaining five figures may represent either the other gods of Buddhist mythology or the five monks who were the first to be taught the Law by the Buddha.<sup>1</sup>

The third scene of the series is the most impressive. The Buddha is shown in the middle, seated on a richly carved chair<sup>2</sup> and leaning on a round bolster which is placed behind his

<sup>1</sup> Regarding the conversion of these five monks, see E. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha*, pp. 82 ff., and H. C. Warren, *Buddhism in Translations*, pp. 342 ff.

<sup>2</sup> The figures of alligators carved at the top of the back

of the chair show fine workmanship. There are also two diminutive figures of men, dressed in tight coats and breeches, and wearing conical caps, carved along the sides of the back of the chair.

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back on the chair. He is dressed in an orange-coloured robe, and the position of the fingers of his hand suggests the teaching attitude (*Dharmachakra mudrā*), which the artist has further confirmed by painting the 'Wheel of Law' symbolically on the palm of the right hand of the Great Being. An ornamental halo may be noticed behind the head of the Buddha, from the oval disk of which rays of glory are emanating. These rays have been shown by the artist as delicate spiral scrolls. Above the chair of the Buddha two cherubs (*vidyā-dharis*) are shown as if descending from heaven, the idea of their descent being suggested by a cluster of conventional clouds painted around them. They hold garlands of pleasing design in their hands which they are offering to the Great Being. On either side of the chair stand two princely attendants, wearing crowns but holding fly-whisks in their hands. The features and the posture of these attendants are very graceful, and as one of them holds a flower and the other a *vajra* they may be identified with Padmapāni and Vajrapāni. Two small figures dressed in white embroidered coats and wearing globular caps (?helmets) with ornamental designs have bent low in deep adoration of the Master.

On either side of the chair of the Buddha are shown magnificent processions of rājās, rānīs, and chiefs riding on richly caparisoned elephants and horses. They are coming in a spirit of receptive humility and modesty, as is indicated by their poses, with an earnest desire to learn the Doctrine from the Master. In the company of the votaries who have already assembled on the left side, one king is prominent; he may be Bimbisāra, who had expressed much eagerness to learn the Truth from Gotama after his Enlightenment.<sup>1</sup>

On the right side at the bottom of the fresco is a company of seventeen monks, one of whom is painted of a slightly larger size than the others, and for this reason he may perhaps be identified with the Elder Sāriputta, whose wisdom and perspicacity the Buddha made known to the congregation by putting successively more and more difficult questions to him.<sup>2</sup> The next prominent figure in the group, dressed in a striped robe, may represent Moggallāna, second in rank to Sāriputta among the chief disciples of the Buddha.<sup>3</sup>

Apart from the identification of the historical and legendary personages which has been attempted above, since the assemblage on both sides of the Buddha's chair portrays in an illuminating manner the pomp and glory of kings, the various elements of the population, and the religious attitude of the people, it will perhaps be of interest to the reader if the painting is described in some detail. Beginning from the left side, almost in the middle of the fresco, two elephants may be noticed who have raised their trunks to adore the Great Being. The heads of the elephants have been drawn with great care; the large, fan-shaped ears, the small, twinkling eyes, and the great waving trunks all combine to present an imposing picture of the extraordinary features of the animal. To add to the majestic appearance of these

<sup>1</sup> The *Mahāvastu* adds two verses in a different metre containing Bimbisāra's request and Gotama's promise that he will return and preach the doctrine 'in his kingdom'. E. Thomas, *The Life of Buddha*, p. 69. See also *ibid.*, p. 92, where the visit of Bimbisāra with a great host of citizens and the king's conversion by the Buddha are described in some detail.

<sup>2</sup> According to the *Jātaka* (iv, 169) one of the questions put by the Buddha to Sāriputta was, 'What is the meaning of matter in all its bearings?'

<sup>3</sup> For further information regarding these two famous disciples, see the *Dhammapada Commentary*, i, 88 ff.; the *Anguttaranikāya Commentary*, i, 155 ff.; and *The Life of Buddha*, 94-96.

PLATES XXXVIII–XL<sup>a</sup>

elephants the artist has decorated their foreheads and necks with pearl and gold ornaments and placed tufts of hair of yak's tail over their ears. There are six men on the backs of the elephants who appear to be the drivers and keepers, since none of them is wearing a crown or is dressed in a style suitable to the dignity of a prince or a chief. The two men in front, who are probably *mahāvats*, are saluting the Buddha. Behind the elephants there are some soldiers of the escort who hold poles with long flags and tassels. Three spears may also be noticed which have banners attached to them. Near the trunks of the elephants are two attendants, one of whom holds the royal umbrella.

By the side of the elephants is a pair of white horses, whose arched necks and decorated manes suggest stateliness combined with pomp. Their heads and ears are also decorated with tufts of hair, probably of yak's tail. The riders upon these horses are foreigners, apparently belonging to countries to the north-west of India, since Gandhāra and the provinces adjoining it remained under the influence of Buddhism for a long time during the early centuries of the Christian era. One of these foreigners has a beard, but the chin of the other is shaved, and only his twisted moustache can be seen. There are two more foreigners, wearing round fur-brimmed caps and embroidered coats. They hold staffs or straight swords in their right hands, and have placed their left hands on the hilts of these weapons in such a manner that they may rest on them by putting their chins on the backs of their hands (Plates XXXIX–XL).

Below the pair of white horses are four guards, all holding naked swords which are of a curved shape. The features, the styles of dressing the hair, and the clothes of these guards differ, showing the artist's love of variety. Of these guards two in front are armed with shields as well, but these also are not of uniform design, one of them being oval in shape and the other rectangular. In front of the guards is the group of princes, comprising five elderly personages and one boy, who may be the son (*yuvarāja*) of the king who has been identified as Bimbisāra in the group (*ante*, p. 68). The boy's young face expresses both innocence and religious ardour. The chief above the young prince is again a foreigner, as is indicated by his features, cap, and dress. People of such features may still be seen on the borders of Baluchistan and Afghanistan. The remaining four princes are all wearing crowns, but designs of these differ, and the style of hair-dressing also varies in each case.

On the corresponding side, to the left proper of the Buddha, is a group of monks whose hair (excepting that of a few in the back row) is close cut. They have joined the palms of their hands together and stretched them forward in the act of adoration, and are looking with wonder and astonishment at the Buddha. Above the company of monks there are three or four horses with rich trappings, befitting the dignity of a prince. The rider on the horse shown in front is apparently a foreigner, judging by his dress. Above the horses a large elephant may also be noticed upon which a rānī is seated adoring the Buddha. There is a party of attendants around the rānī, all of diminutive size, evidently suggesting the extraordinary height of the elephant. The rānī is seated on a low chair placed on the back of the elephant. Among the attendants of the rānī there is a lady who may be seen at the back. Close to her is a child, who has stretched out his hands to catch something in front. The designs of the flags and of the tops of the poles to which they are attached are worthy of

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notice (Plate XXXVIII). The design of the headgear of a male attendant painted a little above the elephant exhibits the freakish temperament of the artist in presenting extraordinary styles.

The most important feature of this fresco, apart from its deep religious significance and magnificent artistic detail, is its wonderful composition. Each part of the subject emerges with regular rhythm and poise, and joins with the main theme without any abruptness or incongruity.

## THE MOTHER AND CHILD BEFORE THE BUDDHA

*Plates XLb-XLI*

*The subject is painted on the back wall of the antechamber, to the left of the shrine door, in Cave XVII.*

THE sublime and intensely human theme of this painting is based on the various stories contained in the Buddhist texts regarding the visit of Gotama to Kapilavastu on the invitation of his father, King Śuddhodana: how he begs from house to house for alms; how Yaśodharā (wife of Gotama) adorns herself in order to tempt him back and sends him a love-potion; and how finally both she and Rāhula her son join the Order.<sup>1</sup> The painter of Ajanta has shown the Buddha's visit to the door of Yaśodharā's abode, she having come out fully adorned with her child Rāhula to meet the Great Being. The painter's object is two-fold: to express human emotion and love in the heart of the woman, and to show the supreme indifference of the Enlightened Being to worldly attachments, his mission being to point out the path of Truth to humanity at large.

The artist has drawn the figure of the Buddha on a large scale, apparently to indicate his spiritual greatness as compared with ordinary human beings;<sup>2</sup> for instance, the representation of Yaśodharā looks very small by comparison. The outline is restricted to showing the bends of the arms and the curves of the waist; otherwise the representation is a well-shaped mass of almost uniform colour, except for the dark tint of the hair and the jade-green of the begging-bowl. The head is, however, significantly inclined towards Yaśodharā, showing compassion combined with love. The features of the face are obliterated, but the eyes are clear and the meditative gaze suggests absorption of mind in high thoughts. There is a green halo around the Great Being's head, and above it a *vidyādhari* (cherub) is holding an umbrella as a symbol of his sovereignty over earth and heaven. Strings of flowers are pouring from the sky as a further sign of his celestial dignity.

Below, by the side of the door, the figures of Yaśodharā and Rāhula are painted, the latter looking up towards his father with affection, mixed with astonishment, since he was only seven days old when Gotama renounced the world. Now, according to the legend, he is

<sup>1</sup> *Mahāvastu*, ii, 234, and *The Life of Buddha*, 99 ff. When entire it may have measured about 10 ft. in height.

<sup>2</sup> The lower portion of the portrait is missing now.

#### PLATES XL b-XLI, XLII & XLIII

seven years old, and at the instance of Yaśodharā is asking from his father his 'inheritance'. What Buddha said and did may be gathered from these words: 'His father's wealth that he asks for is liable to change and trouble; now I will give him the sevenfold noble wealth which I received at the foot of the Bodhi-tree, and make him the owner of an inheritance beyond this world'.<sup>1</sup> Afterwards he was admitted to the Order. Rāhula's beseeching attitude is amply illustrated by his outspread hands and expectant gaze.

Yaśodharā has been shown with all the charm of natural beauty and outward adornments of costume and jewellery, but far more striking is the appealing manner in which she is looking towards the Buddha, with feelings of love first and reverence afterwards. The rhythmic treatment of the different parts of her body, the graceful pose, and the fine brushwork shown in the curls above her temples and in the locks spread over her shoulders all represent art of a high order and make this fresco one of the finest portrayals of feminine elegance and of the emotions peculiar to the sex.

The colour-scheme also shows a refined taste. The orange colour of the robe of the Buddha contrasts well with the dark tint of the background, which is relieved here and there of its sombreness by sprays of white flowers which are being showered over the Great Being from heaven. The light green of the halo has made the golden-brown head stand out almost in relief, while the jade-green begging-bowl has the same effect on the orange robe and the brown hand. The complexion of Yaśodharā is pinkish-white, which matches well with the light colours of her costume and her pearl jewellery. The wrist-rings of Yaśodharā show that the fondness of Indian women for large sets of bangles dates from very ancient times.<sup>2</sup>

#### THE GREAT MIRACLE OF ŚRĀVASTĪ

##### *Plates XLII and XLIII*

*The subject is painted on the right wall of the antechamber in Cave XVII.*

THE fresco, owing to its being badly worn away, has some large gaps, but the three pieces reproduced in Plates XLII and XLIII are closely linked with one another in showing the miracle of the Buddha's ascending into the air, which the Great Being performed at the request of Bimbisāra to satisfy his disciples in face of the taunts of schismatics who boasted, 'If the ascetic Gotama works one miracle, we will work one twice as good'.<sup>3</sup> The miracle was performed at Śrāvastī, the capital city of the Kosalas, the site of which has been located by Cunningham at Saheṭh Maheṭh, on the west border of the Gonda district in Uttar Pradesh.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Life of Buddha*, 101.

<sup>2</sup> On the corresponding part of the back wall, to the right of the shrine-door, was painted another figure, perhaps that of Dipaṅkara, the predecessor of Gotama, who first prophesied regarding the Buddhahood of the latter. The fresco has perished except for the crown of the head of the figure and the representation of the *vidyādhari* holding

the umbrella from which strings of flowers are falling down.

<sup>3</sup> *Jātaka*, iv, 167-8.

<sup>4</sup> A. Cunningham, *Ancient Geography of India*, i, 407; Sir John Marshall in his *Notes on Archaeological Exploration in India* (*JRAS*, 1909, p. 1061) has confirmed the identification of Cunningham on the basis of the subsequent discovery of certain inscriptions at Saheṭh Maheṭh.

### AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

Pasenadi was king of the Kosalas when the Buddha lived in the monastery at Śrāvastī, and his name is associated with several important legends mentioned in the Buddhist texts. Foucher, on the basis of these associations, has identified the front king in Plate XLIII *a* as Pasenadi, but since in the *Jātaka* it is clearly stated that the Buddha performed the miracle at the request of Bimbisāra, we cannot agree with Foucher regarding this identification. On the other hand, Foucher's identification of 'the naked ascetics' who were unfriendly to the Buddha and who wanted to cause schism in the Order is definitely convincing (Plate XLIII *b*).<sup>1</sup>

Now to describe the fresco, taking the subject of Plate XLII first: figures of the Buddha can be seen standing and sitting, arranged alternately, against a dark background which may represent the wall of the pavilion 'covered all over with blue lotus'.<sup>2</sup> Lotus-creepers form the conspicuous feature of the background, and the work has been executed with great skill and taste. The flowers are shown in different stages of bloom, and the slender offshoots and cup-shaped leaves are delineated in all their subtle charm. The figures of the Buddha are more or less conventional and have been represented in different religious attitudes (*mudrās*). The artist's object was to show to the votary the miraculous incident described in the legend, and how, when the Buddha rose in the air, 'he appeared before the Assembly seated in the attitude of *Meditation* on a colossal lotus-flower, and caused to spring from his body a multitude of Buddha-figures in a variety of poses, sitting, standing, lying down and walking'.<sup>3</sup> To add further religious effect to the painting, figures of heavenly beings are shown descending from clouds with offerings for the Great Being.

The next subject plate (XLIII *a*) contains a gorgeously adorned elephant and a horse with equally rich trappings on the left side, and some princes in front, over the head of one of whom an attendant is holding the umbrella. The representations of the elephant and the horse are almost identical with those shown in the colour-plate no. XXXIX, since indeed the miracle painted therein is a pendant to the one shown here.<sup>4</sup> The neck-ornaments of the elephant and the spirited representation of the horse can, however, be better admired in this plate (XLIII) than in the previous one. Above the neck of the elephant a small figure, probably representing the *mahāvat*, is saluting the Buddha. The lotus creeper shown in the background is also seen to advantage in this plate, for the colours have added much charm to the beauty of the design.

Of the figures in front of the elephant, one, for the reasons given above, may be identified as that of Bimbisāra, and the other may be that of his son, since the representation shows a youthful face. There were other princes also in the group, and a portion of the neck and chest of one of these is visible in the fresco.

The group representing the 'naked monks' (Plate XLIII *b*), though it does not possess

<sup>1</sup> *Jour. Hyd. Arch. Soc.*, 1919-20, Pt. V, p. 57

<sup>2</sup> *Jātaka*, iv, 168.

<sup>3</sup> *Ajanta*, i, 35, *Divyāvadāna*, XII, transl. by Burnouf, Introd., pp. 162 ff., and Rockhill's *The Life of Buddha*, p. 79.

<sup>4</sup> According to the *Jātaka* (iv, 168), the Buddha performed a twofold miracle to confound the schismatics. He rose into the air, and afterwards went up to the Tushita Heaven to teach the transcendental doctrine to the gods.

## PLATES XLII, XLIII

any interest from the artistic point of view, is nevertheless of considerable importance to the student of Buddhist sacred lore, since the Buddha performed this miracle to prove his sublimity in face of the taunts of the schismatics, among whom the 'naked monks' were included. The fresco in its present damaged condition contains thirteen figures, four of which apparently represent the naked ascetics, the teacher among them being the greenish dark, fat figure supported by two disciples of a brown complexion.<sup>1</sup> One of these two disciples, shown on the left, has red hair. The artist has deliberately made fun of the gross appearance of many ascetics in India, who, through inactive habits and rich diet, chiefly composed of milk, become huge lumps of flesh and cannot walk without support. The fat teacher among the company in this fresco has, in fact, two *chaurī*-bearers standing behind him.<sup>2</sup>

## THE *SARABHA JĀTAKA*, OR THE STORY OF THE MERCIFUL STAG

*Plates XLIV–XLVI*

*The Jātaka is painted on the rear wall of the back corridor, right of the antechamber in Cave XVII.*

THE fresco has become much blackened owing to various causes, and the beauty of the colours and the skill of the drawing cannot be appreciated; yet the main events of the story can be made out easily.<sup>3</sup> The artist has closely followed the version of the *Jātaka*

<sup>1</sup> Foucher has identified him with Pūraṇa, the heterodox teacher of the naked ascetics. *Jour. Hyd. Arch. Soc.*, Pt. 5, p. 87.

<sup>2</sup> The painting on the ceiling of the antechamber has been obliterated, but on the square basis of its pillars figures of *yakshas* and *yakshinīs* arranged in pairs are intact. Their grotesque features and expressions evoke laughter and exhibit the artist's sense of humour.

<sup>3</sup> The story as given in the *Jātaka* (iv, 169–73) may be summarized as follows:

Once the king of Benares, who delighted in hunting, went to the forest to chase deer, and ordered his courtiers not to let a single animal go by him. The Bodhisattva, who had then been born as a stag, happened to be the first to be put up when the men surrounded a covert and began the beat. The stag, finding men standing on all sides without a break, rushed straight at the king, who, seeing him, shot an arrow but missed; as the stag rolled over, the king thought he was hit and gave the halloo. The circle of men then broke up and the stag, rising, made off swift as the wind. The king, who considered himself the best marksman, seeing that his courtiers were laughing at him, set

off after the stag at great speed and plunged into the forest. There was a covered pit which the stag avoided, but the king fell into it, and as it was sixty cubits deep and full of water, he was unable to get out. The stag, finding he was not followed, retraced his steps and rescued the king, who was struggling helplessly in the water. Setting him on his own back, he then brought him forth from the forest and set him down not far from his army, after admonishing him and establishing him in the Five Virtues.

The king was much impressed by the benevolence of the stag, and when he returned to the city he ordered this proclamation to be made: 'From this day forward, let all the dwellers in this city observe the Five Virtues.' Next day, remembering the noble qualities of the Great Being, when the king was chanting some stanzas which expressed his aspirations, the king's chaplain, who had come to inquire about his health, overheard him, and being a wise person understood the cause of the change in his religious attitude. Afterwards Śakra, who wanted to test the 'noble worth' of the king, having disguised himself as the king's chaplain, went to the park where the king had gone to shoot at a mark. By his power the god made the stag

### AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

except for the test of the king's 'noble worth' by Indra, who, however, is seen with two other gods (?) in a hall shown in the lower part of Plate XLV<sup>a</sup>. The story begins with the king's going out to hunt with his retinue, and this is reproduced in Plate XLV<sup>a</sup>. The gate of the city from which the royal party has emerged is shown at the left end of the fresco. Near the gate there are three footmen armed with swords, one of them being clad in a long white coat. Close to these footmen is an officer of the royal retinue riding on a horse. Ahead of this officer is the king himself, riding on a spirited horse which is shown going at a fast canter. Behind the king is his umbrella-bearer, and by his side are three hunters with dogs, running alongside the horse. Quivers filled with arrows may be seen attached to the saddles of both horses, namely those ridden by the king and by the officer of his retinue. There are four attendants in front of the king's steed, and one of them is armed with a bow. The artist, to suggest that the royal party is passing through a forest, has painted some trees in the foreground (Plate XLV<sup>b</sup>). Among these trees the *samālū*, the cotton-wool tree (*Bombax heptaphyllum*), and the teak can be recognized by their leaves.

A little farther up, towards the right, the royal party is shown again, and the king can be easily recognized by his umbrella-bearer. The officer of the retinue in this scene is shown as if separated from the king, for some large trees have come between the two. Farther up on the wall, in the middle of the top of the fresco, the king's horse is shown without his rider; evidently the king has alighted from his horse to chase on foot the stag, which, according to the *Jātaka*, he believed to have been wounded by the arrow shot by him. Below, a little towards the right, a pit has been shown, outlined by a band in the painting. The surface of the pit is covered with the leaves and flowers of aquatic plants, and on one side the king is shown with joined hands in an attitude of utter helplessness, looking towards the stag, who is standing at the brink of the pit and looking down compassionately at his pursuer. Lower down, along a range of conventional hills, the stag may be seen again, climbing up with a large boulder on his back. This is to suggest that the stag made a sort of rehearsal in order to be sure whether he would be able to rescue the king from the deep pit into which he had fallen.

Returning to the pit, the stag is shown carrying the king on his back and climbing up the precipice. Above, the king is seen again sitting in an attitude of reverence before the stag, who is teaching him the Five Virtues, as is related in the *Jātaka*. Subsequently the return of the king has been indicated by the headlong gallop of the royal steed, which is represented not only by the significant drawing of his legs but also by the tassels of his mane and the hair of his tail, which are waving in the air. The ends of the king's scarf, which are stretched out behind him, also suggest rapid movement.

The next two scenes of the painting, to the left of the last scene, which owing to the dim-

appear between the king and the mark and repeatedly provoked him to shoot the stag. The king refrained from committing such an ungrateful act and recited this stanza:

'Once in a grisly forest full of dread  
That very stag saved me from hopeless woe.'

How can I wish my benefactor dead,  
After such service done me long ago.'

Sakra, on hearing this stanza, assumed his own shape, and wished the king long life on earth so that he might comfort the people of his kingdom by benevolent acts.

PLATES XLIV-XLVI

ness of the fresco were not identified by previous scholars, are also connected with the story. One of them represents the king sitting at ease on the floor, but he is in a thoughtful mood, evidently revolving in his mind the events of the day, his own conduct, the peril of his life, and the stag's mercifully rescuing him and finally teaching him the Five Truths.<sup>1</sup> The queen, who is sitting by him, has lovingly placed her hand on his thigh in order to arouse him from his state of profound meditation, which she does not understand, since the king, according to the *Jātaka*, 'had told no one of the kindness done to him by the Great Being (in the guise of the stag)'. A maid is rolling bread, or perhaps preparing some dainty for the king's supper, and another maid, to be seen between two pillars of the hall behind the king and queen, is apparently bringing food of some sort for him. The pose of this maid, which is fairly clear in the original fresco, is extremely graceful. On the right there are two more maids, who in typical Indian style have placed their hands on their chins, as if to express their astonishment at the king's being so absorbed in reflection. In the *Jātaka* it is mentioned that 'the king ate many choice meats' in the evening, and that afterwards he retired. The painting confirms the serving-up of appetizing dishes to the king there mentioned.

On the left side of the fresco another scene is depicted in which the king is shown seated on a throne, while with the forefinger of his right hand he is pointing at something, perhaps instructing one of his attendants to admit the brahman chaplain, who is shown sitting on a low chair, a little below the king's throne. According to the *Jātaka*, the chaplain overheard the six stanzas which the king recited to express his aspirations after a better life, and in his perspicacious mind divined the events which had taken place when the king went out to hunt, and the impression which they had made on his heart. In the painting the gesture made by the brahman with his hands indicates that he is following the religious significance of the stanzas which the king is reciting.

Behind the throne there is a lady of a fair complexion, and to her left a *chaurī*-bearer, whose face is darkish-green in colour. There are two more ladies to be seen farther to the left between the pillars of the building. Their gestures suggest that they are talking together. At the left end of the fresco there are some trees, among which a banana is prominent on account of its large leaves. On the right side of the throne another *chaurī*-bearer may be noticed, and also a maid who holds in her hand a vessel with a lid.

Below the king's court a pillared hall can be seen in the painting in which three persons are talking together. They perhaps represent gods, since one of them has a third eye in his forehead, and this type of figure when found elsewhere is usually identified as Indra. His presence in the painting suggests the last episode of the *Jātaka*, in which Indra disguised himself as the king's chaplain in order to test the monarch's steadfastness in following the injunctions of the Law as taught to him by the benevolent stag.

In the lower part of the painting there are two buildings, one of them being a pillared hall crowned by three *stūpa*-shaped domes, the finials of which resemble the finial of the original temple at Bodh Gaya, as shown in the photograph taken by Mr. Peppé,<sup>2</sup> or the top of the

<sup>1</sup> The king holds a staff in his right hand, while his left hand is suspended in a sling.

<sup>2</sup> Fergusson's *History of Indian and Eastern Architecture*, vol. i, p. 78 (revised edition).

## AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

lid of the reliquary-casket discovered at Piprawa. On the roof of the hall there is a balustrade upon which are set ornamental horseshoe-shaped arches, like those of the *chaityas*.

The other building consists of a hall, the roof of which is supported by stone beams resting on pillars. The openings of the hall are filled up with lattice work such as can be seen in the tenth- to twelfth-century temples of the south-western districts of the Deccan.

### THE *MĀTRIPOSHAKA JĀTAKA* (?), OR THE STORY OF THE ELEPHANT WHO HAD BLIND PARENTS

#### Plates XLVII-XLVIII

*The subject is painted on the rear wall of the back corridor, between the first and second call-doors, to the right of the ante-chamber in Cave XVII.*

THE story depicted on the rock-wall at Ajanta differs slightly from that given in the *Jātaka*,<sup>1</sup> but agrees with the version recorded in the Chinese text, translated by E. Chavannes, which mentions that both of the sacred elephant's parents were blind and that he cherished them with affection. The artist has divided the story into two parts for convenience of representation and has painted one above the other. In the top part is represented the royal court in which the forester reported the magnificent appearance of the sacred elephant, and has shown how the king, on hearing this report, ordered his staff to go with the forester and to bring the elephant to his stables. The elephant is shown on the right after he has been brought to the court stables. In the lower part of the fresco two more episodes are represented, the capture of the sacred elephant, and his going back to his blind parents when the king released him because he would not take any food while parted from them.

To describe the top part first, and beginning from the left side, a pillared hall may be seen which has a portico on one side (right). In this hall a king is sitting on a throne; his pose

<sup>1</sup> The version contained in the *Jātaka* (iv, 58–61) may be summarized as follows:

Once upon a time, when Brahmadatta reigned in Benares, the Bodhisattva was born as an elephant in the Himālaya region, a magnificent white beast. But his mother was blind, and the other elephants did not give her the sweet food he sent; so he took her away to Mount Chandorāga, and there he cherished her. One day he saved a forester, who for seven days had lost his way, and carried him out of the forest on his back. The man, however, marked the trees and hills, and then made his way to Benares. At that time the king's state elephant had just died, and there was a proclamation seeking another fit for the king's riding. The forester betrayed the friendly elephant, and showed the king's hunters the way. The

Bodhisattva, in spite of his great strength, refused to destroy them, lest his virtue should be marred; so he was caught in the lotus-lake, taken to the king's stable, and decked with festoons and garlands. The king took all manner of fine food and gave it to him, but not a bit would he eat: 'While parted from my mother I will eat nothing', he said. When the king heard the story he gave him his freedom and the elephant went back to the hills and to his mother; drawing water from a limpid pool, he sprinkled it over her, until at last she knew him and blessed the king's goodness, and the king did continual honour to the Bodhisattva, and made a stone image of him. The story is also given in *Mahāvastu*, iii, 129, and *Bhadra Kalpavatana*, No. 32, and *Contes*, iii, 13–14.

PLATES XLVII–XLVIII

indicates ease of mind but his face, particularly the eyes, suggest that he is absorbed in thought. A maid with a *chaurī* in her hand is standing behind the king's throne. There is a lady close to her, richly dressed and adorned, and a servant sitting on the ground is adjusting the anklet of her right foot. This lady may be the queen. Her features have been drawn with great care and are extremely attractive. The pose is also very graceful and her way of wearing the *sārī* in a close-fitting manner round the lower part of her body is equally effective.<sup>1</sup> The faces of both the queen and the *chaurī*-bearer are light in hue. On the left of the queen the figure of another attendant may be traced, who is represented as of a reddish-brown colour.

There is another *chaurī*-bearer behind the throne on the right; and near her, by the side of a pillar, is a maid who is holding a flower in her right hand and a dish of fruit or food in her left. Behind this maid there is another figure which may be that of the forester or of a guard of the court. Below, in front of the king, a man is sitting on a low chair, and looking attentively towards him. He may be the minister or perhaps the chaplain, whom the king perhaps consulted about state, as well as about religious, affairs.

In the middle a *shāmiyāna* may be noticed under which the king is sitting with four attendants.<sup>2</sup> There is a big gap in the fresco at this place, but the outline of the king can be made out and that of the umbrella which is over his head. The king is giving something to the attendant next to him; it may be some choice sweets for the elephant. The maid on the right side of this attendant holds on her shoulder a tray of sugared flour (*malīdā*) which has also been prepared for the elephant. A servant dressed in a long white coat is standing in an attentive attitude, evidently in readiness to carry out the orders of the king regarding the feeding or stabling of the animal. Below, two short-statured aborigines are sitting by a circular tub in which is food to be given to the elephant. By the side of this tub a wheeled food-carriage may be seen which is full of *laddūs* (sweet-balls). A bundle of sugar-cane, of which elephants are fond, may also be noticed near the food-carriage. A little below is a basin, which, apparently, also contains some choice food for the animal. Towards the right, a servant is bringing two heavy bundles of green grass, hung from a bamboo placed on his shoulders. The load is so heavy that he has been bent down under it in a rather uncouth posture (Plate XLVII). The hunters who had gone to capture the elephant may be seen at the right end of the fresco. They are armed with spears. Two red (pinkish) elephants also, who had been sent to round up the sacred elephant, may be seen with their *mahāvats* and *charkatās* at the top of the painting on the right side.

Below, the sacred animal is standing inactive and has refused to take food. When the reason for this attitude is explained to the king, he compassionately releases the animal, who goes back to his blind parents. The figure of the elephant is drawn faithfully, and his unusual colour and colossal size justify the description given in the *Jātaka*: 'All white he was, a magnificent beast.' But much more striking are the representations of the animal shown in

<sup>1</sup> The artist is perhaps the same who painted the fair princess and the maid in attendance on her represented on the back wall of the veranda of this cave. *Ajanta*, iii, Plate LXVI.

<sup>2</sup> According to the *Jātaka* (iv, 59) the city was decorated for the reception of the Bodhisattva, and the *shāmiyāna* set up in the royal court where the sacred elephant is being received may be a part of the decoration.

#### AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

the lower part of the fresco, where his capture by the king's staff and his return to his blind parents are delineated.

The 'capture' scene shows how the animal has been brought under control by tying strong ropes round his hind-legs and trunk with the help of a specially trained staff, who are seen armed with long spears. There are two officers in front of the elephant and a prince behind him, all three on horseback. The prince is also armed with a spear, that being perhaps the most suitable weapon for self-protection as well as for intimidating the animal when capturing it. The rapid strides of the elephant are admirably indicated and the drawing of the figures in general shows superior craftsmanship.

Above the last scene the return of the animal to his blind parents is shown. Here his pace is much more rapid than his movement when he was being conducted to the royal court, although there he was being urged to walk fast by pricks with spear-heads. The joy of the animal at his release has been appropriately suggested by his ambling trot or canter. A prince, riding on a bay horse and accompanied by four guards, is following the animal to watch his meeting with his blind parents. Three spearmen are running ahead to make the path clear for the return of the elephant to the lotus-pool by which he lived. The bank of the pool has been indicated by a wall of masonry, and the presence of lotus-flowers suggests the water-surface. The dutiful son is pouring water over the head of his mother in order to console her because she had been feeling miserable at his absence.

'Then from the cool and limpid pool, where Elephants frequent,  
He with his trunk drew water, and his mother all besprent.'

The blind parents are fondly caressing the body of their son, while he himself is trumpeting with joy; the artist has cleverly suggested this by painting him with open mouth and raised trunk. The instincts and characteristic habits of the elephant are also shown with considerable effect in the *Shad-danta Jātaka* painted on the right wall of Cave X,<sup>2</sup> but for intellectual quality and technical skill this painting (Plate XLVII) far surpasses the other.

#### THE MATSYA JĀTAKA, OR THE STORY OF THE FISH WHICH SAVED ITS KINSFOLK FROM CERTAIN DEATH

*Plates XLIX a-L a*

*The story is painted near the end of the rear wall of the back corridor, right of the antechamber in Cave XVII.*

THE fresco has been badly blackened by the smoke of the fires lit by *yogīs* who lived in the cave in later times, and who did not understand either the religious or the artistic merits of the paintings. Further, owing to the damage done by birds and insects, several portions of the fresco have peeled off from the rock-wall and big gaps are now to

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, iv, 60.

<sup>2</sup> *Ajanta*, iii, Plate XXX.

be seen in the painting. The subject is based upon the *Matsya Jātaka*,<sup>1</sup> and a tank is represented which is swarming with fish of various sizes and shapes, and among them a large one, the King Fish, has raised itself up and is looking towards heaven as if to pray for rain to save its kinsfolk from destruction. There are as many as fifty fish shown in the painting and they are all poorly drawn; but the figures of cranes and some other aquatic birds, which are shown flying above the water or sitting in different attitudes near the top left-hand part of the tank, exhibit art of a better type. The necks of the cranes, which are twisted and stretched in various manners, appear particularly pleasing to the eye.

As the stories of the virtuous deeds of the Buddha in his previous births were probably related occasionally by the chief monk to his disciples in such *vihāras*, the illustrations of the stories on the rock-walls must have added much to the zest of the votaries in following the morals contained in the stories. Apart from their religious significance, which, however, cannot be overlooked, several of these paintings may appear to a strict art critic overcrowded and ill arranged on the rock-wall, particularly those executed in the back corridor of this cave. The only plausible answer which can be given to the connoisseur in defence of the artists is that the teaching of the doctrine and the propagation of the legends were the essential aims of the painters in the monasteries of Ajanta, and to consider them as merely galleries of art and to judge them solely from that point of view is, therefore, perhaps hardly justifiable. On the other hand, it cannot be denied that the builders of the monasteries and the chief monks who watched the work of decoration when it was in progress encouraged art to the best of their understanding, and allotted the master-artists appropriate places and adequate space for the execution and display of their work.

## THE *SYĀMA (SĀMA) JĀTAKA*, OR THE STORY OF A YOUNG HERMIT WHO HAD BLIND PARENTS

*The story is painted on the rear wall of the back corridor, below the Matsya Jātaka, in Cave XVII.*

THE subject is also painted in Cave X and perhaps with greater artistic effect,<sup>2</sup> but in the present fresco (Plate XLIX *b*) a great hindrance to the proper appreciation of its artistic merit is that it has deteriorated badly. Not only have the colours and the drawing become dim, but many gaps have appeared owing to the peeling off of the painted surface in several

<sup>1</sup> The story as given in the *Jātaka* (i, 184-5) is here summarized:

The Bodhisattva was once born as a fish living in a tank at Sāvatthī (Srāvasti) in the kingdom of Kosala. A drought overtook the land; the crops withered, and water gave out in tanks and pools, causing the fishes and the tortoises of this pond to bury themselves in the mud. The crows and other birds flocked to the spot and picked them out with their beaks and devoured them. Noticing the

sorry plight of his kinsfolk, the Great Being decided to save them in their hour of need. He therefore came out, parting the mud from underneath. He made a solemn Profession of Goodness and by its efficacy obliged Pajjunna, king of Devas, to cause heavy rains to fall, and thus saved his kinsfolk from certain death. And when his life closed, he passed away to reap the reward of his kind act.

<sup>2</sup> *Ajanta*, iii, 29-31 (text), Plates XXVIII *b*-XXIX *a-b*.

### AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

places. The story is delineated here in four episodes. At the top Śyāma is shown filling a pail of water from a lotus-pool for his blind parents, during which act he is hit by an arrow shot at him by mistake by the rājā of Benares.<sup>1</sup> The portion of the fresco where the rājā was represented has peeled off; only the head of his horse has survived, and it is a fine piece of drawing, particularly the eyes and the nostrils of the animal, the eyes showing startled grief and the nostrils widened by heavy breathing due to excitement caused by the tragic accident. The facial expression of Śyāma, who is standing immersed almost up to his knees in the waters of the pool, suggests gentle innocence. The surface of the water is shown covered with lilies and other aquatic flowers.

The artist, with a view to impressing upon the votary Śyāma's devotion to his blind parents, has painted a scene near the bottom of the fresco in which the hermit is shown carrying his decrepit parents in slings hung from a bamboo placed across his shoulders. The features of Śyāma's face are obliterated, but his carrying his parents in this manner proves his deep affection for them. Near the slings may be seen a pair of deer, who, according to the *Jātaka*, had become much attached to the young hermit because of this devotion to his parents.

Above this scene is shown another in which the rājā of Benares is carrying the corpse of Śyāma to his parents so that he may explain his tragic mistake and implore their pardon. The rājā also wants to assure the parents of Śyāma that he will cherish them with the same affection as their son did.

The miraculous restoration of Śyāma to life by Bahusodarī, a daughter of the gods,<sup>2</sup> is not shown in this fresco, but the incident has been suggested in a scene painted above the last, in which Śyāma is teaching the Doctrine to the rājā. The fresco is again damaged at the place where the head of the rājā was drawn, so that the expression of his face cannot be judged, but the pose in which he is kneeling before Śyāma clearly shows his deep devotion to the young hermit (the Bodhisattva). The dress of the rājā and the spirited figure of the horse both add to the vividness of the scene.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, vi, 40–52, and *Mahāvastu*, ii, 209. A summary of the story is given in *Ajanta*, iii, 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Jātaka*, vi, 47.

<sup>3</sup> Figures of a pair of peafowl on the right-hand side

of the fresco, above the conventionally shown hills, can be made out in the original painting. A pair of monkeys may also be traced in the left corner. A pigeon perched on a ledge may further be described.

## THE MAHISHA JĀTAKA, OR THE STORY OF THE BENEVOLENT BUFFALO AND THE MISCHIEVOUS MONKEY

### Plate LIa

*The subject is painted on the right wall of the back corridor, to the left of the cell-door, in Cave XVII.*

THE fresco representing this story has become very dark as the result of centuries of smoke from fires lighted in the cave, and in some places the painted surface has actually peeled off from the rock-wall; yet such portions as are intact show clearly the main incidents of the story and agree with those mentioned in the *Jātaka*.<sup>1</sup> At the top of the fresco is a hill-scene in which a prince (or some god) is shown sitting on a ledge and pointing out with his forefinger the incidents painted below. Near the bottom of the fresco a 'strong and big' buffalo may be noticed, on whose back a monkey is perched who has mischievously put his paws over the eyes of the buffalo. The latter (the Bodhisattva), being of a forbearing nature, has taken no notice of the impertinence of the monkey. A little higher, in the middle of the fresco, the same monkey may be seen looking dejectedly towards another buffalo, who has thrown him down on the ground because the monkey had tried to tease him also, thinking him to be the same buffalo (the Bodhisattva) who had previously taken no notice of his pranks.

In the original fresco the prince or god shown at the top appears in front of the buffalo in both incidents of the story. At the bottom he is warning the mischievous monkey with his forefinger not to tease the benevolent buffalo. In the episode painted above, the prince (or god) is watching the pitiful fate of the monkey who has been thrown down mercilessly by the other buffalo who was not the Bodhisattva.

The figures of the buffaloes and the monkey are cleverly drawn, otherwise the painting is of greater religious interest than artistic value.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A summary of the story as told in the *Jātaka* (ii, 262-3) is as follows:

At one time the Bodhisattva was born as a buffalo. Growing strong and big, he used to range the hills and mountains. Once, after grazing, when he was standing under a pleasant tree, an impudent monkey which was on that tree came down, and getting on the back of the buffalo voided there; then taking hold of one of the horns swung down from it by his tail and disported himself. The Bodhisattva, being full of patience, kindness, and mercy, took no notice at all of his conduct. This the monkey did again and again without any resentment on the part of the Great Being. But once another buffalo, a savage beast, happened to come and stand under the same tree, when the Bodhisattva was at another place. The wicked monkey, thinking it to be the animal on whom he had been playing such pranks with impunity, climbed on his back and did as before. The savage buffalo at once shook him

off upon the ground, drove his horn into the monkey's heart, and trampled him to pieces. See also *Jātaka-māla*, No. 33, and *Chariyā Pitaka*, ii, 5. *Contes*, No. 432, has a somewhat different version.

<sup>2</sup> Above the cell-door is painted a subject which according to Foucher may be connected with the story of a tame elephant who, at the time of the mating season, escapes to the forest to return again to the stable (Prabhāśāvadāna in the *Satrālankāra*, No. 53, and the *Bodhisattvāvadāna-Kalpalatā*, Nos. 1 and 100). An elephant going at a trot may be seen at four places in the upper part of the fresco. The representation is realistic; the tail of the animal is stretched out, and the forelegs are bent and the hind-legs extended backward. Lower down, on the left side of the painting, a king and queen are shown seated on a throne with attendants on both sides. On the right side is a swarthy figure, while on the left is a brown-faced male attendant armed with a sword. His attitude suggests that

## A YAKSHA OR A ROYAL GUARD

Plate LI c

*The figure is painted on the face of the pilaster between the right and back corridors in Cave XVII.*

IT may represent a *yaksha* or a royal guard, but what particularly strikes an art critic in this portrait is the air of foppishness which the painter has purposely introduced in order to please his own sense of humour. The calm, serene, religious expression of the guard's face is not in consonance with his gaudy costume and extravagant jewellery. The striped material and the frilled ends of the borders of his *dhotī* unmistakably point to his being a man of fashion, an impression which is confirmed by his rakish pose, the axis of the figure moving in an undulating line from head to feet. The treatment of the fingers with their well-set nails is also intended to give the idea of vapidity and vanity. The notion of youthfulness is well conveyed by the strong, well-proportioned limbs, and the various features of the portrait, when studied with due regard to the object which the painter had in mind, make this painting one of the best works of those executed in the fifth century A.D. at Ajanta.

## THE SIMHALA AVADĀNA

Plates LI b—LXIV a

*The story is painted on the entire wall of the right corridor and is continued to the upper part of the pilaster between this corridor and the one at the back of Cave XVII.*

THE story which is painted at Ajanta differs slightly from the version given in *Divyāvadāna* (No. 36, pp. 523–8)<sup>1</sup> and contains some details of *Jātaka*, No. 196, according to which five hundred merchants, after the wreck of their boats, were cast ashore near a city of ogresses, who lured the merchants by their charms and provoked them to become their husbands. He is telling something to the king. Below, in front of the throne, are five guards armed with daggers and swords (or short spears). The daggers are stuck into the *dhotis* which the guards wear round their waists. Towards the right is the stable of an elephant where a trough for water and a basin for food may be seen. The elephant, which according to the story had run away, has evidently now returned, since he is standing in the stable, and three persons are looking eagerly at him from a door which opens upon the palace enclosure (? enclave). The gate of the stable may be seen towards the right; it has a barrel-shaped roof. Outside the gate the figure of the elephant can be seen again. The *mahāvāt* is shown perched on the neck of the elephant, suggesting that he has succeeded in bringing the mad animal back to the stables. The fresco has become very black and the details of the painting are invisible, except in the case of a few figures which can only be made out with much difficulty. The identification of the subject is therefore by no means certain.

<sup>1</sup> A summary of the story as told in *Divyāvadāna* has been made by Dr. R. N. Dandekar, the distinguished secretary of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute, and his able assistant, Shri V. J. Rahurkar, and is given here with their kind permission:

Formerly, at the time when king Simhakēśārī ruled in Simhakalpa, there lived in that city a very rich merchant named Simhaka. His wife gave birth to a beautiful son, whom he named Simhala. In course of time, young Simhala became well versed in various arts and sciences. He then requested his father to allow him to go on a sea-voyage. The father tried to dissuade him from his intended voyage, but his advice proved of no avail. He finally

bands. Afterwards, in the night-time, the ogresses began to slay and eat the merchants, who fell into a panic, and thought to themselves, 'We must make our escape.' The Bodhisattva, who was then born as a 'flying horse', passed over the city, and on seeing the merchants in their sad predicament was filled with compassion and offered to take them home. He conveyed away as many as two hundred and fifty of the stranded merchants, and the rest, who did not avail themselves of his benevolent offer, were destroyed by the ogresses. Now in the fresco at Ajanta the adoration of the miraculous horse has been given as much prominence as the courage of Simhala, who vanquished the hosts of ogresses and after the conquest of their city became king of the place (*Tāmradvīpa*). The version given in the *Divyāvadāna* lays stress only on the later events of the story and does not exalt the miraculous power of the horse or his benevolent instinct. The story is also given in *Mahāvastu*,<sup>1</sup> and by the time it was painted at Ajanta (fifth century) it had evidently developed fresh features based on older legends combined with the later versions. ✓

The story begins on the rock-wall with the shipwreck-scene painted a little above the ground between the third and fourth cell-doors. It goes up above the top of the fourth cell-

allowed him to go, but warned him that he would have to encounter many dangers on the way. Simhala then left Simhakalpa, accompanied by five hundred other merchants, and carried with him abundant merchandise. After visiting many places on the way he ultimately reached the seashore. During the voyage, all the other merchants were devoured by *rākshasī*, and Simhala was the only one to reach *Jambūdvīpa* safely. The *rākshasī* who had been entrusted with the killing of Simhala was, however, urged by the other *rākshasī*s to carry out her task. She thereupon assumed a dreadful form and appeared before Simhala. But when the latter unsheathed his sword she was frightened and fled.

In the meantime a merchant had arrived there from Madhyadeśa. The *rākshasī* fell at his feet and said to him: 'I am the daughter of the king of *Tāmradvīpa* and was married to Simhala. During the voyage his ship was wrecked in the sea. He therefore abandoned me, thinking me to be inauspicious.' When the merchant from Madhyadeśa went to Simhala to plead on behalf of the *rākshasī*, Simhala told him that the woman was not a princess but a *rākshasī*. In the course of time Simhala returned home. The *rākshasī* also, disguised as a beautiful damsel and carrying with her a handsome child resembling Simhala, went to Simhala's house. The people took the child to be Simhala's son and asked the woman where she came from. She told them the same story about her being the princess of *Tāmradvīpa* and about her abandonment by her husband Simhala. When the latter's parents came to know of it, they asked him to forgive her and accept her. Simhala then exposed to them her real character. Thereupon the *rākshasī* went to the king and narrated the same

story to him. To the king also Simhala exposed her real character. But the king, who was enamoured of her beauty, said to him: 'If you do not want her, give her to me.' 'She is a *rākshasī*' replied Simhala, 'I will not give her to you nor will I prevent you from taking her.' The king then admitted her to his harem.

Afterwards the *rākshasī* administered a sleeping-dose to the king and all his harem. She then went to the other *rākshasī*s and said to them: 'Why do you trouble about an ordinary merchant like Simhala? I have given a sleeping-dose to king Simhakalpa himself and all his harem. Come, let us devour them.' All the *rākshasī*s accordingly went to the palace and devoured the king together with his whole family. In the morning the palace-doors were not opened and vultures were seen hovering over the buildings. All the people were stunned by the sight. When Simhala came to know of it, he went there and could easily guess what must have happened. He told the people that the king must have been killed by the *rākshasī*. With a sword in his hand he then scaled the palace-gates and frightened away the *rākshasī*s. He opened the doors, the ministers searched the palace, but no trace was to be found of the royal family. In consultation with the people, the ministers then offered the throne to Simhala, who accepted the offer on condition that all people should obey him. In course of time Simhala raised a powerful army and set out to drive away the *rākshasī*s from *Tāmradvīpa*. When attacked by Simhala, the *rākshasī*s agreed to leave the island. It was then colonized by Simhala, and thereafter was called Simhaladvīpa after its conqueror.

<sup>1</sup> *Mahāvastu*, iii, 67 ff., and *Contes*, Nos. 37-59.

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door, turns towards the left, and reaches to the end of the wall, covering the upper part of the pilaster there; thence it moves downwards and occupies the wall-surface between cell-doors 1 and 2 and 2 and 3. The portion of the fresco showing the shipwreck-scene is much damaged (LXIII *a*), but the wreckage of two boats, caused either by the attack of sea-monsters or by the striking of the boats against a coral reef, can easily be made out. The coral growth and some sea-anemones with dentate leaves are shown at the bottom of the water. The head of a white monster with a thick muzzle and rabbit-like ears is visible between the two boats. Another monster, painted red, has swallowed one arm of a man who has fallen into the sea and seems to be entangled in weeds. He is looking helplessly upwards for succour. Another monster, whose muzzle is like that of a hippopotamus, is chasing a man who has also fallen into the sea. The features of this man are well drawn, and his fixed look suggests terror and despair. There are some large fishes around the boat, two of which appear to be of colossal size; they may be sharks, which abound in the Indian Ocean. Two men may also be noticed holding ropes which would seem to have been thrown from the boats in an attempt at rescue. They are both near the bow of the boat, in the rear. The drawing of the head of the man shown in front exhibits clever workmanship; the artist has placed high lights on the lip, nose, and forehead in order to show the refined features of the figure to advantage. Some men may be seen still in the wrecked boats; in the rear vessel, a tall, strong man is visible at the end of the boat, and he is perhaps the steersman. Another stalwart figure is holding firmly to the rear mast near the stern. There is another figure, the head of which is now destroyed, who is clinging to the mizzenmast of the boat, with his arm round it. In the front boat there are also two men, and one of them, in the bows, holds in his hands a box tied with string. The box evidently contains some precious articles which the merchant does not want to lose, even when in peril of his life. The man behind this merchant holds a rope in his hands with a view to throwing a line to such passengers as have fallen into the sea and whose lives he is attempting to save. At the top right corner of the fresco there are three men, painted in different colours, struggling in the water to escape from monsters which are approaching them (Plate LXIII *a*).

The next scene represents the island of the ogresses, who, having by their blandishments and physical charms enticed the merchants who were cast ashore there, and having spent the day with them in play and feasting, assumed their real appearance at night and devoured them.

The gay revels indulged in during the day are depicted by the artist with great zest, and some of the figures, in their grace of pose, refinement of features, and details of dress and ornament, rank among the finest specimens of the art of Ajanta. Although the fresco, owing to the deterioration of the wall-surface, shows large gaps, five pairs may still be seen in the middle enjoying themselves in pavilions or *shāmiyānas* set up in the island. The most prominent pair, shown in the upper part of the wall between the third and fourth cell-doors, consists of a slim, dark-skinned person sitting with an ogress who is also dark in colour. The male figure has placed his arm round the shoulders of the woman, who is looking coquettishly at him and appears to be pleased with his lack of restraint. The graceful pose of the female figure and the firm outline of her body exhibit art of a high order. A little higher, above the fourth cell-

door (Plate LXIV a), four more pairs may be seen. In the pillared pavilion at the extreme left side a short-statured, pretty woman is offering a cup of wine to her companion, who, as is suggested by his pose, is in a dallying mood. The next pair, shown sitting under a *shāmiyāna* to the right of the first pair, shows a dark woman sitting almost in the lap of the male figure. She has stretched her arm across the chest of her companion in order to encircle his neck, and in this action her *sārī* has slipped down to her waist. The facial features of this couple are somewhat obliterated, but the outline of the body shows perfect command of drawing. Below this pair a woman wearing a green silk *choli* and striped *sārī* may be seen sitting on one of the upper rungs of a bamboo ladder, perhaps trying to listen to the amorous conversation going on in the *shāmiyāna* set up above. Farther on the right is another couple sitting in a pillared room. The room has flower-beds and trees in front of it; and at a lower level an amazon may be noticed, armed with a long straight sword which she has placed on her shoulder. There is another woman to be seen between the two right-hand pillars of the pavilion, whose duty may also be to guard the pavilion. This may be the room of the queen of the ogresses. The features of the queen (?) are indistinct, but the pose suggests that she is flirting with her male companion.

In the second row, to the left of the woman sitting on the ladder, a dark woman has fallen asleep, or is in a state of inebriation, at which the male figure is struck with astonishment. A maid-servant has brought some edibles for the couple; she is shown standing behind them. Another maid-servant is sitting in front of the couch on which the dark woman is resting. The coiffure of the dark woman, which consists of a series of rolls of hair arranged one above the other, is well rendered. The outline of the body of this woman, who is in a reclining position, is also worthy of notice.

The coiffure of another figure, although the painting is much damaged, shows a highly developed style of hair-dressing and consequently an advanced stage of culture in the social life of the people (Plates LXII and LXV b).<sup>1</sup> The features of the woman are also very refined. She was probably in the close embrace of a male figure whose hand may be noticed round her neck and left shoulder. The woman has amorously clasped the wrist of her male companion, and the emotion felt by her is expressed by the artist in her almost visibly quivering fingers.

Above the fourth cell-door, at the top right corner, a white horse can be seen<sup>2</sup> which is looking with horror at the daylight revels, and evidently anticipating the dreadful fate which awaits the merchants during the night. He has opened his mouth and exposed his teeth, as if to say, 'Who wants to go home? Who wants to go home?'<sup>3</sup> Simhala, who by prescience has guessed the probable fate of his companions, accepts the offer of the 'white horse' and escapes from the island. The artist has shown two groups of men and women in front of the horse; the group close to the animal shows a chief and a green-skinned woman in the forefront and two other male figures behind. The chief probably represents Simhala, and the green woman the ogress who wants to go with him. They are both in an attitude of reverence before the

<sup>1</sup> Lady Herringham has published a reconstruction of the subject. *Ajanta Frescoes*, Plate XXVII, Fig. 44.

<sup>2</sup> The white colour of the horse is specially mentioned in the *Jataka*, ii, 90.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

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horse. The pose and the features of the green woman are very attractive. The other group, which is shown to the left at some distance, represents those merchants who refused to accept the offer of the horse and continued to enjoy themselves. One merchant (?)—a dark-skinned figure—is represented with a cup of wine in his right hand.

The departure of Simhala on the back of the white flying horse is painted above, but before describing it we may note two other aspects of the character of the ogresses, showing how they behaved with their visitors, because these matters are mentioned in the *Jātaka* and are also represented on the rock-wall at Ajanta (Plates LXI–LXII).<sup>1</sup> The artist, side by side with the scene in which the ogresses are shown enjoying themselves with the merchants, has painted them as ordinary women, adorned and bedecked, even ‘with children on their hips’, when they approach the merchants during the day-time. This deceptive power of theirs may be noticed in the group shown a little above the main tent, on the right side, in which five women (ogresses) are represented, one holding a child in her arms. The other scene is gruesome in the extreme, since it shows the ogresses in their real form, with grey, woolly, unkempt hair, wild, staring eyes, and loose breasts, drinking human blood in cups, or munching the entrails of the victims whose chests and bellies they have ripped open. The artist has shown as much imagination in depicting the ugly, disgusting features of the ogresses as he showed in drawing the comely figures of the women represented in the gayer scenes. They are all armed with large curved knives like the *dā'o* of the present day. One of them, a grey figure, is sitting on the chest of her victim; another is drinking his blood.

Above this loathsome scene is shown the flight of the miraculous horse in the air, with Simhala on his back and other merchants clinging to the different parts of his body. According to the *Jātaka* ‘some laid hold of his tail’. The fresco in its upper part has become very dark, but two giant figures are clear, who are holding the hoofs of the miraculous horse; they may represent either more merchants or guardian spirits come to protect the horse against the attack of the ogresses. The latter seems more likely, since a little farther towards the left are represented some figures which have been thrown down from the air, evidently either by those who are sitting on the back of the horse or by those accompanying him in his flight. The horse can be traced, as if flying in the air, above the figures of those who have fallen down (Plate LXI).

The next scene represents the miraculous horse alighting near a gateway and Simhala kneeling before him in gratitude for saving his life (Plates LV and LVI a). The artist from this incident onward follows largely the version given in *Divyāvadāna*, although scenes regarding the honouring of the miraculous horse which are not mentioned in the latter work are inserted here and there. To describe the story in proper sequence, the next scene on the rock-wall following Simhala’s return to his native place, Siṁhakalpa, represents a beautiful woman with a child at the royal court. The woman is probably the ogress, who by some supernatural power has followed Simhala and has brought with her the child of her illicit union with the youth (Plate LV). Close by, Simhala may be seen again with another person, perhaps one whom the rājā had deputed to make inquiry into the matter. The drawing of the

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, ii, 89–90.

figures of the ogress and the young Siṁhala shows considerable beauty of line, although their facial features are obliterated. According to the *Divyāvadāna* the ogress pleaded thus: 'I am the daughter of the king of Tāmradvīpa and have been married to Siṁhala. During the voyage, his ship was wrecked in the sea; he therefore abandoned me, considering me to be inauspicious.' The king, who is sitting on a throne at the end of a pillared hall, is enamoured by the assumed beauty of the ogress, and supposing her story to be the truth, says to Siṁhala: 'If you do not want her, give her to me.' 'She is a *rākshasī*,' replied Siṁhala; 'I will not give her to you, nor will I prevent you from taking her.' The rājā chooses to admit the ogress to his harem, and he sends some ladies of the court to receive her. In the fresco they are five in number, and the lady in front of the group, who is of a dark complexion, holds a goblet of liquor with grapes piled over it for the refreshment of the newly wedded wife of the rājā. The features, coiffures, costumes, and poses of these ladies are exquisite, and further, to add a comic effect to the composition, the artist has painted with the ladies a dwarf who is carrying, on a tray placed on his head, some sacred plants growing in vases for the ceremony to be performed at the reception of the rājā's new bride. The body of the dwarf is bent in an uncomely manner under the heavy load of the tray. The most striking figure of the fresco is, however, the representation of the brahman minister, who is dressed in a long white coat and is shown leaning on a long staff in front of the rājā. The artist has drawn his facial lines in such a manner as to indicate a grave temperament and an iron will, and the portrait may remind some of the skilful character-painting of the famous Dutch painter Rembrandt. The rājā has inclined his head towards the minister to indicate that he is listening with attention to the advice of the latter, but the expression of his face in the original fresco suggests joy in the possession of a beautiful bride. There are two ladies behind the throne of the rājā and two more to the left of the minister, and a fifth one sitting on the floor near the throne of the rājā; the faces of all five betray feelings of anxiety at the wrong choice of the rājā. The heads of two more ladies may be noticed in the window overlooking the room where the rājā is sitting. Their eyes also show consternation and sorrow at the unhappy event.

The line-work of the fresco is largely obliterated now, but such detail as remains shows the marvellous command of the artist in drawing, his refined taste in the choice of poses and drapery, and his consummate skill in the blending of colours. The arrangement of the figures is perfect, showing a feeling for rhythm as well as a sense of perspective. The pillars of the hall also convey the idea of space and distance.

Adjoining the court-scene towards the left is another, representing the lustration of a lady who is probably the newly chosen wife of the rājā (Plates L d and LV). She is scantily dressed, but there is nothing provocative in her attitude; on the contrary the beauty of her limbs combined with the serene expression of her face suggests an almost religious aura, and she appears to be more of a goddess than an ordinary woman. One *gāya* is holding an umbrella over her head, two other similar beings are plying fly-whisks. Another *gāya* is bringing on his head a stool on which the lady is to sit when bathed and perfumed. His companion has poured a jar full of sacred water on the ground where the lustration-stool is to be placed. The artist, to add to the religious symbolism of the subject, has shown the lady

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poised on a lotus-flower, and a similar flower is carved on the stool on which she is to sit. She further holds a lotus in a dainty manner between her fingers, with two of which she has also made a *chakra* or ring. There is a *gana*, a little above, towards the left, who is felicitating the lady by raising both his hands. The entire composition shows artistic and religious elements blended in a happy style, and the subject, for its exquisite workmanship and graceful lines, has been aptly compared by some European art critics with Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* in the Accademia delle Belle Arti in Florence.

To the left of the court-room, which was apparently meant for public audience, the artist has shown in the fresco the inner buildings of the royal palace, which were entered by two lofty gateways, each at some distance from the other (Plate LIII). On entering from the first gateway the rājā has seated himself on a throne and is holding a meeting of his council, in which his minister, the religious head, and several chiefs of the state are represented. The minister is sitting on a chair in front of the rājā; behind the minister is the chief *bhikshu* (the sage of the court), as may be guessed from his robe and close-cropped hair. Close to the *bhikshu* are two other persons, one of a ruddy complexion and the other painted dark brown. Below, towards the right, is the woman (ogress) with the child, whose plaint is being reconsidered by the rājā in council. Facing the rājā and the minister are seated four chiefs, one of whom, at the extreme left end, is wearing a crown. They are all sitting on the floor and looking with astonishment at the woman, as is indicated by the gestures of their fingers. The artist has given different skin-colours and varying casts of feature to these chiefs with the object of showing that they belong to different clans. In the forecourt are two horses held by grooms who hold the reins of the horses in their hands; one of them has also a short whip. On the right are four soldiers armed with curved swords and large shields of semicircular shape. The check-pattern on the coverings of these last perhaps represents conventionally the rhinoceros-skin of which shields were usually made in ancient times.

The line-work of the fresco has been much obliterated by the passage of time, yet such detail as has survived shows superior technical skill and high intellectual qualities in the painter.

The next scene of the story is painted on the left side of the second cell-door, and represents the arrival of Simhala at the inner gateway of the palace after hearing of the destruction caused by the ogresses in the royal palace. There are two horses, one of a white colour—probably the one which helped Simhala in his escape from the island of ogresses and has brought him here as well, and the other green (grey), belonging to the court-official who has informed Simhala of the disaster. Two soldiers are shown in front of the horses, one of whom is armed with a long straight sword, and the other with a curved weapon. The headgear of the groom standing by the grey horse is worthy of notice. It is a peaked cap with flaps at the sides which can be turned down to cover the ears as a protection against the cold. Below is shown the figure of the minister, seated on a chair in a melancholy mood, and pointing with his forefinger to the catastrophe that has befallen the inmates of the palace. The portion of the fresco on the right side, close to the cell-door, has peeled off and consequently the other figures once represented in the scene are no longer visible.

To add to the tragic effect of the incident the artist has painted two more scenes in the lower part of the fresco (Plates LIII and LXVa). In one of them, to the left of the second cell-door, three chiefs are shown sitting on chairs, and in front of them are two officials seated on the floor, one of them pointing with his finger to the royal apartments and his companion showing astonishment by his gestures. To the right of these officials are four guards standing at attention, with naked swords raised in their hands. The curled folds of the *dhotis* of these soldiers, although artistic to a degree, do not suit the dress of a warrior; similarly the styles of their hair show them to be men of fashion rather than hardy fighting men. The chiefs sitting on chairs and the officials in front are perhaps the members of the rājā's council, whom he consulted when choosing the ogress as his wife (*supra*, p. 88), and who are now shown discussing the measures to be adopted with regard to the situation. The other scene, to the right of the first cell-door, represents the rānī's parlour, in which the rājā's throne with a bolster placed at the back of it is shown vacant, and the rānī is mourning in front of it. She is sitting on the ground and in her grief has placed her head on the palm of her left hand. The sage (? minister) of the court is sitting in front of the rānī, and although a part of his figure is destroyed owing to the perishing of the fresco, the positions of his hand and head suggest that he, too, is in a sorrowful mood. In the forecourt of the parlour seven guards are in attendance, six of whom are armed with swords and shields, while one holds a long staff in his hand. He is wearing a full-sleeved white coat, while the others are naked down to their waists. The artist, for the sake of variety, has given varying tints to the faces and forms of these guards.

The bed-room of the rājā has been shown in the uppermost stage of a three-story building, the main features of which are its pillared rooms and carved friezes. The upper part of the fresco being very dark and also badly damaged, the full detail of the bed-chamber and its occupants cannot be made out. A couch with short legs can, however, be traced in the middle apartment in which the rājā would be sleeping. His figure may be identified by his crown. A woman may also be descried sitting on the rājā's chest. The head of the woman is destroyed, but the fact that she is a woman is certain from the lower limbs of her body as well as from the ornaments she is wearing round her ankles. According to the story, this woman must be the *rākshasī* who, after killing the rājā, sat on his chest to suck his blood.

The second stage of the building, as represented in the fresco, is somewhat clearer. There are three apartments; the middle one, which is larger than the other two, projects towards the front in the form of a spacious pillared balcony. In the left apartment there are three ladies; the middle one, who is of heavy build, has fainted at the sight of the ogresses, and her companion on the left is supporting her from behind. The third lady, to be seen near a column, is horror-struck and has placed her hand on her chin. In the middle apartment there are three ogresses and also three ladies who have been attacked by them. At the top a red ogress has clutched the back knot of the hair of the lady close to her, and is attempting to cut it with the dagger which she holds in her right hand. Another ogress, of a paler complexion, has thrown down a lady and has placed her foot on the lady's body in order to trample her to death. Yet another ogress, who is also of a pale complexion, holds a dagger in

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her right hand and a cup in her left. From the cup she is evidently drinking the blood of a victim. The third lady of the palace has assumed a pose showing her terror by starting backwards and bending her body away from her assailant. She has also placed one hand on her head and the other on her breast (Plate LIII).

In the apartment on the right-hand side there is only one ogress and three ladies. The ogress has plunged a dagger into the abdomen of the lady in front of her, and having filled her cup with blood she is drinking it. The blood which has trickled from the wound of the victim may be seen in streaks over her body. The other two ladies have been seized with horror, and one of them, to suppress her cry, has placed her hand on her mouth. The other lady is also much excited, and in an effort to control her terror she has placed her hands on her breast.

The artist has followed the version of the *Divyāvadāna* and painted vultures hovering over the palace. One bird is perched on the lofty gateway of the building, and another is sitting in the forecourt and pecking a piece of human flesh (Plate LIII). In the midst of these gruesome and dreadful surroundings, Simhala is shown climbing up the steps of a wooden ladder to drive away the demon women. He is armed with a long sword which has frightened the ogresses, and they are seen running away from the roof, cornices, and walls of the palace to which they had climbed in order to kill the ladies of the bed-chamber and thereby appease their appetite for human flesh and blood. The ogress nearest to Simhala, shown above the roof of the rānī's parlour, holds a bell in her right hand and a piece of flesh in her left. She was probably acting as a sentinel, and the bell was to be used to give an alarm to her party against danger. A red vulture has swooped down and fixed its beak into the piece of flesh in the hand of this ogress in order to snatch it from her. A little above is a pale demon holding a woman of a greenish colour in her cruel grasp. Towards the left, vultures may be seen flying over the pieces of flesh which are lying below on the floor. Eight of these birds can be counted in the original fresco, and the long naked necks of some of them are painted very realistically.

Farther up, at the right end of the lintel of the cell-door, is a red ogress with bulging eyeballs, protruding tusks like those of a boar, and dishevelled hair. In her left hand, which is raised, she has a piece of flesh, while with the forefinger of her right hand she is making a sign as a warning to the other ogresses. A crow may be seen snapping at the piece of flesh which she has in her hand. Her attitude, springing up with bent knees, show that she is intended to be shown flying upwards. Near by, towards the left, is another white demon, holding a cup with red stripes (? streaks of human blood). Three birds of prey have swooped down from the air to snatch the contents of the cup. Farther to the right is another ogress of a pale complexion and frightful appearance, holding a red cup with round pieces of human flesh piled in it. A vulture has come down close to the cup to share its contents.

The flight of the ogresses is continued on the face of the pilaster on the left side of the corridor, and the figures of five of these creatures may be traced in the original fresco, though the upper two, being very dark, are not clear in the reproduction (Plate LI b). The red ogress at the top, on the left side, holds the leg of a victim; the next below her has a cup of

blood in her left hand and something else, perhaps a lump of flesh, in her right. The third ogress, who is of a dark complexion, again holds the leg of a victim in her hand. The legs of these ogresses are again drawn in such a manner as to suggest that they are flying up in the air.

After driving away the ogresses from the palace Simhala led a large army to chastise the latter for the havoc which they had wrought by killing the rājā with his family and attendants. The army, which includes elephant-riders, footmen, and cavalry, is shown coming out from the city-gate. Simhala is riding on a white elephant and is accompanied by two chiefs who are riding on two separate elephants, one of them being dark grey and the other a pinkish grey. These chiefs have umbrellas over their heads, held by their attendants, but with a view to showing their devotion to Simhala and their sense of being his vassals, they carry fly-whisks in their hands. Simhala has a crown on his head, which shows that he has now been acknowledged as king by the people of Simhakalpā following the death of Simha-keśarī at the hand of the *rākshasīs*. There are a number of footmen behind the elephants holding spears and flags. Some of the banners have tufts of hair at the top. Tufts of hair, probably of yak's tail, have also been used for the adornment of the elephants. The elephants are further bedecked with disks and bands of jewellery, fixed round their foreheads and trunks. As usual, they are drawn with much realistic effect, and the swaying of their trunks as they move forward is admirably represented. The white and pink elephants have entwined their trunks as they pace forward, to indicate their attachment to one another. There is a company of footmen in front of the elephants who are armed either with spears or with swords and shields, these footmen being so placed in the marching column that each swordsman has by his side a spearman, first on his right and then on his left, throughout the line of men. The artist, for the sake of variety, has given varying colours and different features to these soldiers, apparently to show that the troops are of mixed races. Their upper garment is a half-sleeved jacket so short that it covers only the chest, and the waist is exposed.

Below, the army is shown crossing the sea in boats, which are interesting from the point of view of their shape and their holding capacity. Beginning from the left side, the first boat has four horsemen in it. The horses of three riders are visible, but the mount of the fourth is concealed by the three steeds in front of him. The fourth rider is, however, visible. The riders are armed with long spears, two of which have square flags attached to their heads. The artist, to indicate the spirited nature of the horses, has shown them almost prancing in the boats. One animal is silver-grey, another bay, and another steel-grey. They are bedecked with tufts on their heads and ears, and have other ornaments on their chests. The boat is of a long curvilinear shape, decorated with carving along its upper board and at the bows. At the latter place a dragon's head is represented which exhibits clever workmanship. The long tongue of the dragon is shown protruding from the jaws in an ingenious style. Lower down, the paws of the dragon are also shown carved in the keel of the boat. Two oars may also be noticed along that side of the boat which is visible; there would, of course, be two more out of sight on the other side. Three more boats of the same design may be seen in front which are carrying elephants. There is only one animal in each boat. The size of the elephants appears too large in the painting compared with that of the boats in which they are being

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carried, the artist's idea evidently being to indicate the colossal bulk of the animals.<sup>1</sup> There are *haudās* (howdahs) on the backs of the elephants to protect the riders from the missiles discharged by the enemy. The riders of all three elephants, including Simhala himself, are shooting arrows at the forces of the demons which have assembled on the shore in front, and appear to be engaged in the fight. Quivers filled with arrows may be noticed attached to the sides of the howdahs. The pose of the *charkata* sitting on the haunches of the pink elephant is very characteristic. His headgear with a tassel at the top is also worthy of notice. The *mahāvats* sitting on the necks of the elephants are watching the progress of the battle with considerable excitement, and one of them, in the middle, has turned his head away, evidently being horrified by the sight, or wishing to avoid some missile thrown at him by the enemy. The goads which they hold in their hands to regulate the movements of the animals are clear in the painting. Behind the elephants numerous banners and spear-heads can be seen, the staffs of which are evidently held by footmen marching side by side with the elephant-riders.

It appears that the landing has already taken place, since both horsemen and footmen of Simhala's army can be seen near the right end of the fresco, where a fragment of the painting has peeled off. At the top, four warriors may be made out, one of whom, riding on a white horse, has been hit with an arrow in his abdomen and is bravely pulling out the arrow. Below, a green (silver-grey) horse has fallen down on his back, while his rider is held down by the animal's neck and forelegs, under which he has fallen. Near by, a demon has broken the lance of a soldier of Simhala's army, who is looking furiously at her. She has a viper entwined round her neck. At the back of this figure a soldier is threatening another demon with his sword. Below, near the bottom of the fresco, is yet another soldier who has been wounded in his belly, spilling out his entrails; he is pressing them back with his hands. On the left side of this soldier there is an ogress who has raised her hands as if to beg for mercy. Her hair and pendent breasts exhibit the artist's bizarre imagination. Close to this ogress there is a second who has seized the hair of a soldier with one hand and his wrist with the other. The soldier has evidently tried to attack the ogress with his sword. The features of this ogress show very exact drawing. Below, there are three ogresses, each in a different pose; one has placed her hands on the ground, another has joined and stretched them out in front, and the third is saluting. These attitudes suggest that the demons have acknowledged the military prowess of Simhala and are prepared to surrender. The facial expression of the second ogress suggests that she is appalled at the ferocity of her companions. Above, another fight is shown between a soldier of Simhala's army and a *rākshasī*. The soldier is armed with a sword, while the ogress holds a large knife with a curved blade in her right hand, and to frighten the soldier she has raised up her left hand as if she would either strike him or catch hold of his sword with that hand. Farther up, another ogress may be noticed who has placed her hands

<sup>1</sup> Griffiths on this point writes: "These may be thought open to the criticism on Raphael's Cartoon of the Draught of Fishes, viz., that his boat is too small to carry his figures. The Indian artist has used Raphael's treatment for Raphael's reason; preferring, by reduced and conventional

indication of the inanimate and merely accessory vessels, to find space for expression, intelligible to his public, of the elephants and horses, and their riders, necessary to his story." *The Paintings of Ajanta*, vol. i, p. 38.

PLATES LI *b*-LXIV *a*

round the neck of a soldier with the intention of throttling him. The eyes of the soldier have bulged out in the struggle. At the top are three more ogresses, flying in the air with the object of attacking the elephant-riders. One of them in front holds a spear, the middle one has the trunk of a tree in her arms to hurl at the head of the enemy, and the third holds a piece of rock on the palm of her hand for the same purpose. All three show a threatening attitude, and are indicating with their forefingers and the wild gestures of their eyes the danger which lies ahead from Simphala's army. The ogress in front has, however, been hit in the forehead by an arrow (Plates LV, LIX *b*, and LX).<sup>1</sup>

The three episodes into which the subject is divided, viz. the march of the army, the crossing of the sea, and the fight with the ogresses, which are painted continuously, give a most vivid picture of the military expeditions of early times, both in regard to equipment and the arrangement of units. The weird element of the myth is fully shown in the uncanny figures of the ogresses, and although some of the detail may be conventional to a degree, the painting as a whole undoubtedly ranks amongst the greatest works of art in the world during the contemporary period.

Immediately above the battle-scene the artist has painted the *Abhisheka* of Simphala, which ceremony would have preceded his formal assumption of the kingship of Tāmradvīpa, mentioned in the *Divyāvadāna*. Simphala is shown sitting on a throne, with the royal crown on his head and other state jewels round his neck, arms, and wrists. He holds a conical fruit (mango or coconut) in his right hand, the religious symbol of fertility. Two male attendants are pouring the water of consecration over his body, while two more hold fly-whisks in their hands. The latter have crowns on their heads and appear to be vassal-chiefs. In front of the throne are two groups of men and women, the members of the royal orchestra and some other palace-servants. The group on the right side consists of five men, two of whom are drummers and the other three stewards in charge of the royal household. One of them in front holds the royal apparel, the next on the right side has a tray in his hands containing articles of toilet and *pūjā* (worship) which are to be seen in flasks and beakers. Another steward, near the *chaurī*-bearer on the right side of the throne, is also holding a tray, which doubtless contained similar articles, but as the fresco has peeled off at that place the shape and the nature of these articles cannot be determined. Of the two drummers to be seen at the right end of the fresco, one holds an elongated double drum and the other a round instrument.

On the corresponding side, towards the left, are five women, and one male figure who is playing on a drum. Among the five women three hold cymbals in their delicate fingers, and the remaining two are engaged in dancing. These two are wearing crowns of flowers on their heads. The most striking features of this scene are the graceful poses of the musicians and the artistic folds of their lower garments—the *dhotis* which are worn by men, and the *sarīs* by women. The coiffures of the women are equally attractive, and the care which the artist has bestowed on the drawing of their soft, shapely fingers, arranged in different ways to

<sup>1</sup> Among the weapons of war, circular rings or discoids, noticed in the portion of the fresco representing the army probably with very sharp edges, were thrown at the of the ogresses.  
enemy in order to inflict severe wounds. They may be

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express the sensitive nature of their sex, cannot but evoke the highest praise from the connoisseur (Plates LV, LVIII, and LX).

It is extremely likely that in the celebration of the victory of Simhala over the ogresses the adoration of the miraculous white horse who helped Simhala in his escape from their island would have been an important ceremony. Accordingly the artist of Ajanta has painted a long scene in which the white horse is first shown ahead of a magnificent procession of elephant-riders and footmen, and is finally worshipped by a party of soldiers; the latter incident is painted on the rock-wall side by side with the representation of the lustration of Simhala (Plates LV, LVII, and LVIII a).

The procession starts from the royal palace and passes through the principal street, some shops of which are represented in the fresco. One of them is probably a vegetable and fruit shop, since several pumpkins or gourds are shown hanging from the lintel. The second shop, on the right side, is not clear because the drawing here, owing to the breaking up of the fresco surface, has been destroyed. The next shop, farther towards the right, represents two women, one of whom is weighing something (? a bunch of bananas) in the scales, while the other is the customer (Plate LIV a).<sup>1</sup> Above, two elephants may be seen, one of whom is pinkish-grey and the other white.<sup>2</sup> Simhala (?) and another chief are riding on these elephants. They are sitting in *haudās* (howdahs) which hide their bodies. Quivers filled with arrows can be seen suspended along the sides of the howdahs, and as the attendants around and in front of the elephants are all armed, the procession offers altogether an impressive spectacle. The uniforms of the attendants differ: some are clad in long white coats, the majority in short jackets with half-sleeves, and a few in coats of ordinary size (medium). The complexion, features, and accoutrements of the soldier close to the trunk of the elephant, on the right side, are worthy of notice. Two sturdy attendants hold long staffs with triple banners immediately behind the miraculous horse. The presence of the banners imparts an additional air of majesty and dignity to the horse. The artist has further displayed consummate skill in drawing the portrait of the horse, showing his high breeding in the slender and well-proportioned legs, and his pride of race in the arched neck and dignified gait.

The figure of the horse near the end of the scene is also most imposing, and the artist, with a view to impressing the onlooker with the inner powers of the sacred animal, has given a certain brightness to his eyes which bespeak his joyous and benign nature. The horse is surrounded by a company of soldiers, who, as their steps suggest, are walking round him, and when they come in front of him in the course of their circumambulation they salute by raising both hands. Two soldiers, one of a fair complexion and the other ruddy, who have thus come in front, are saluting the horse in the same manner. Close to the ring of soldiers, on the right side, three persons have prostrated themselves on the ground in adoration. The *dhotis* worn by the soldiers are of a striped material which may be silk, but the use of such

<sup>1</sup> As the fresco has become very dark the shopkeepers and the wares of the shops are not clear in the reproduction.

<sup>2</sup> Above the shops, to the left of the elephants, there is the figure of a dwarf conducting a person towards the

council-meeting where the plaint of the ogress against Simhala was considered (*supra*, p. 88). This person may be Simhala, but as the figure is broken the identification is not certain.

stuffs combined with the ornamental folds and the decoration of the hair with flowers observed above (p. 82) betrays a kind of effeminacy particularly noticeable in the dress of a warrior. They are all, however, armed with swords, the blades of some being curved and others straight. Behind the horse a dark figure wearing a long white coat may also be noticed. He is probably the groom attending to the horse during the ceremony.

Apart from conventional incongruities such as the dress of the soldiers or the decoration of their hair, the beauty of the line-drawing of the figures and the vividness of the entire composition are such as to engross the attention of the art-critic and prevent him from dwelling on minor faults.

## A TOILET SCENE

### *Plate LXIVb*

*The subject is painted in the upper part of the pilaster between the front and right corridors in Cave XVII.*

THIS scene represents a princess engaged in her toilet, with two maids and a female dwarf in attendance. One maid, who is standing in a graceful manner, holds the *chaurī*, while the other has a tray in her hands, containing requisites of the toilet in artistically shaped phials and vases. The dwarf has a sack slung on her back, which probably contains various parts of the princess's raiment. The poses of all the four persons in the group are very typical and show not only the manners of the court life of those days but also in an indirect way the feelings of the persons represented. The princess is looking into a mirror which she holds in her left hand, while in the right she has either a flower or a sachet (?) of perfume to apply to her face. The dainty way in which the princess holds this requisite of the toilet indicates a person accustomed to luxury and refined surroundings. Her emotional reactions are further illustrated by the way in which she has crossed her legs and inclined her left foot to one side.

Her apparel is of the gossamer-like fabric for the manufacture of which India has been famous from early times. The dress therefore is invisible where it covers the body, and is only to be deduced from the long ends of the lower garment which have been artistically shown in the form of wavy edges at the sides. The jewellery is, however, abundant and prominent, and takes away the otherwise inevitable impression of nudity. She has a band of rubies with pearl drops round her forehead, and another ornament of pearls, which may be a coronet, on the upper part of her head. The ruby ornament has a crest in the middle which is also set with rubies of good colour. Ruby ornaments can also be seen round the neck and waist of the lady, which may suggest that she was particularly fond of this gem. There are pearl ornaments as well on her body; for example, there are five strings of them, with clasps in the middle, on her breast, and several strings of them round her waist. The bracelets on the wrists are also set with rubies and pearls. The hair of the lady is dressed in the form of clusters, and is arranged on the forehead so as to be seen below the ruby ornament.

The dim outline of the facial features and the fading of the colour of the lower lip have deprived the painting of a great deal of its charm, but such lines and colours as have survived

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present a magnificent picture of feminine beauty and adornments as conceived by the artist in the light of the ideals of his time.

As regards pose, the one assumed by the *chaurī*-bearer on the left is more spontaneous and elegant than that of the princess. She holds the *chaurī* in an unaffected manner, looking aside naïvely with a graceful turn of her head, and she is bending the left knee and raising the heel of the left foot so that only the toes touch the ground, these youthful poses exhibiting a pleasing undulation of the body-line which reveals both high artistic skill and refined taste.

The pose of the other maid, holding the tray and standing on the opposite side, may not be so graceful as that of the *chaurī*-bearer, but the expression of her eyes suggests a refined temper worthy of the attendant of a princess.

The figure of the dwarf, drawn with a long body and short legs, and with a meek, submissive look on the face, introduces a pleasant change in the otherwise formal scheme of the painting.

The most notable feature of this subject is, however, the lovely chiaroscuro, shown in the splashes of light on the rose-coloured ranges of conventional hills, and the dark-green shade of the foliage of the mango-trees in the background. Touches of light have also been shown on the head of the princess in order to brighten her coronet and other jewels. This use of chiaroscuro, so skilfully employed in this work, is rarely to be found in the other paintings of Ajanta, and shows the artist's individual appreciation of the beauty of contrasts of colour in Nature.

### THE ŠIBI JĀTAKA, OR THE STORY OF THE RĀJĀ WHO GAVE HIS EYES IN ALMS

#### Plates LXV c-LXVII

*The subject is painted on the pilaster between the front and right corridors and is continued on the right wall of the front corridor in Cave XVII.*

THE episodes painted at Ajanta agree in the main with those mentioned in the *Jātaka*,<sup>1</sup> but as the fresco has deteriorated considerably, and in some places the painted layer has peeled off from the rock-wall, some incidents of the story can only be guessed at. For instance, the episode painted on the pilaster below the Toilet Scene (Plate LXV c) apparently

<sup>1</sup> A summary of the story as told in the *Jātaka* (iv, 250-6) is as follows:

Once upon a time the Bodhisattva was born as Prince Šibi, the son of the King of Arishtapura. On the demise of his father he became king himself, and forsaking the ways of evil he kept the Ten Royal Virtues and ruled in righteousness. He built six alms-halls and visited them personally on certain days of each month to see to the distribution made. He gave much in alms, but one day he thought to give something that was truly himself—his heart or flesh or his eyes. The Bodhisattva resolved to give

away his eyes should anyone demand them, saying:

'If there be any human gift that I have never made,  
Be it my eyes, I'll give it now, all firm and unafraid.'

Sakra, the god, resolved to try him, and he came as a blind beggar and asked first for one eye, then for the other; and the Great Being gave them, suffering great agony, surrounded by his weeping and wailing ministers and the ladies of the palace. After making the gift the Prince remained in the palace for a few days, but finally decided to hand over his kingdom to the courtiers and become an

PLATES LXV c-LXVII

represents the event mentioned in the *Jātaka*, how after Prince Śibi had resolved to give his eyes in alms 'he bathed himself with sixteen pitchers of perfumed water and adorned himself in all his magnificence'.<sup>1</sup> The figures are very faint, but a prince with refined features and golden complexion can easily be made out. He is wearing a high crown and has made a loop (*chakra*) with the fingers of his right hand. This symbolically suggests his noble resolve to sacrifice his eyes in the service of humanity. The figure of a maid may be traced on the left side of the prince; she holds a tray of royal jewels (?) with which the prince is to bedeck himself in accordance with the *Jātaka* version. On the corresponding side there is another lady, probably the princess, who is in a sorrowful mood and has placed her head on the palm of her right hand, which is raised. The features of this lady are very beautiful, and her pose also, though suggestive of grief, is graceful. In front there are some more figures whose heads or torsos may be made out, but complete bodies cannot be traced. A dwarf wearing a coronet can, however, be divined with some certainty. In the background the belts of hills and the dense foliage of trees give a pleasant setting to the scene.

The story is continued on the right wall of the front corridor, and the next scene represents a lake, on the bank of which two princes are seated on large lotus-flowers (Plate LXVI a). Both of them are wearing high crowns lavishly set with jewels. The prince shown at a lower level in the fresco may be identified as Prince Śibi, since the socket of his right eye is shown as empty, indicating that he has given away this eye. Further, a three-letter inscription is painted on the lotus on which this prince is sitting, giving his name as Śibi, which confirms the identification.<sup>2</sup> The other prince may be identified as the god Indra, who according to the *Jātaka* tested the virtue of Prince Śibi by watching his generosity in giving alms, and thereafter restored his eyes. The lake painted here is the one to which the Prince retired after handing over the government of his kingdom to his courtiers.<sup>3</sup> Aquatic plants, some of which are in bloom, are artistically shown on the surface of the lake. In the background are hills, with creepers and ferns sprouting from their crevices. The fresco is much damaged and there are several gaps, but when complete it must have been a fine example of the artist's faithful study of Nature.

The next scene, painted on the left side of the cell-door, represents the gathering of the officials of the court, 'and those beloved of the king', when the news spread 'that the king wished to tear out his eyes and give them to a brahman'. In describing the scene from the

ascetic. The courtiers were grieved by his decision, but finding him firm in his resolve they took him out in a golden litter and brought him to the side of a lake. Śakra was touched by the noble sacrifice made by the Prince and gave him the eyes of 'Truth Absolute and Perfect, uttering praise as follows:

'O fostering King of Sivi land, these holy hymns of thine  
Have gained for thee as bounty free this pair of eyes divine.  
Through rock and wall, o'er hill and dale, whatever bar  
may be,  
A hundred leagues on every side those eyes of thine shall  
see.'

The news that the Prince had got his eyes again spread quickly throughout the kingdom, and vast crowds assembled to greet him and offer suitable presents to him. 'Then the drum was sent beating about the city, to collect all trade-guilds', and when they assembled he said, 'O people of Sivi! now you have beheld these divine eyes, never eat food without giving something away.' He further declared the Law to them by dwelling on the virtue of self-sacrifice. See also *Jātaka Mālā*, No. 2, and *Avadāna Śātaka*, No. 34.

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, iv, 251.

<sup>2</sup> For the inscription see *Ajanta*, iii, 96.

<sup>3</sup> *Jātaka*, iv, 254.

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left side of the painting first, the figure of Indra can be seen, who is watching from heaven the assembling of the people; this is evident because his legs are bent in such a manner that he does not seem to rest on the ground but is floating above it. Below him are shown two ladies, who are probably maids of the court, one of whom holds a *chaurī* with a silver (?) handle in her hand. The pose of this lady and the bead design of the handle of the *chaurī* are worth notice. On the right side of the maids is Prince Śibi, sitting at ease on the throne, with one foot resting on a green stool and the other leg folded and placed on the throne. As the painting of his head is broken in the fresco, the expression of the face cannot be seen. Behind the throne is the Commander-in-Chief, or the chief guard of the court, whose figure, though damaged, can be identified by the ornamented handle of his sword.

To the left of the Prince is the minister, who is seated on a chair, and who, to show the perplexity of his mind, has made a *chakra* with the finger and thumb of his right hand. There are two more high officials close to the minister, and one of them, who is wearing a coronet, has joined his hands imploringly as if to suggest that he is ready to carry out any orders whatever if only the sacrifice of the king's eyes may be avoided. The expression of this officer's eyes adds to the general impression of his deep anxiety. Below, there are two dwarfs, the hair of one of whom is spread on his back. There are some more figures besides these, but as the fresco is badly damaged at this point their features and facial expressions cannot be determined.

On the corresponding side (right) of the cell-door the artist has painted the tragic episode in which Śivaka, the royal surgeon, takes out the eyeballs of the Prince and sets them in the sockets of the blind beggar. The Prince is shown enduring great agony from the operation, and to support himself he has stretched out his right arm and placed his hand on the throne. He has twisted his body and back (Plate LXVI c) in excruciating agony. To the right of the Prince is the figure of Śivaka, the surgeon (?), who is sitting on a cushion and has made a gesture with his fingers indicating his own regret and affliction. There is a lady immediately behind the Prince who is also struck with grief and has lowered her head and supported it with her hand. To the left of the Prince there are two more ladies, one of whom is apparently sobbing and has covered her face with both hands. The other is also very sorrowful, and in her grief has placed one hand on her breast and the other on her head. Her eyes also suggest deep distress. To the left of the surgeon is the blind beggar, Indra in disguise, who had asked for the gift of the eyes, and another mendicant who may also be a god, perhaps Śiva, since a bull, the usual symbolic vehicle of the latter god, may be seen at the top of the painting.

The modelling of some of the figures shown in these scenes exhibits consummate skill, but the most important and striking feature of the paintings is always the atmosphere of pathos so effectively conveyed in the last scene (Plate LXVI c).

On the upper part of the wall two more scenes are painted (Plates LXVI d-LXVII) which appear to be connected with the same story. One of them represents an 'alms-hall' where food is being distributed to the poor, and the other the sending round of a 'drum' in the city to invite 'the trade-guilds' when Prince Śibi wishes to instruct the people in the Law after the miraculous restoration of his eyes. According to the *Jātaka* Prince Śibi after his accession

PLATES LXV c-LXVII

to the throne 'caused six alms-halls to be builded, at each of the four gates, in the midst of the city, and at his own door'.<sup>1</sup> The alms-hall represented in the painting (Plates LXVI *d* and LXVII *b*) may be that near a city gate, since a lofty portal is portrayed at the left end of the fresco.<sup>2</sup> The hall is a timber structure with a roof sloping on both sides, and examples of the kind of bamboo framework on which the roof rests may still be seen in Indian villages. A stalwart male attendant is bringing a pail of water to offer to the mendicants who are shown standing in front. Close to this attendant is a woman holding on the palm of her left hand a vessel containing food. To her left there is another male attendant who is offering some sort of liquid sustenance, *dāl*, whey, or milk, to a female beggar who holds a cup in her hand. Near by there is also a male beggar with a sickly face and shabby, untrimmed beard. Above the latter there are two more with long, unkempt hair. In front of the woman who holds a vessel, near the basement of the hall, another mendicant can be seen sitting on the ground and drinking water from a cup made of the leaves of trees.<sup>3</sup>

Close to the gateway a *shāmiyānah* may be noticed in which also food is being offered to the poor. There are two servants of the alms-house who are carrying food for distribution; one of them holds a basin-shaped vessel and the other a circular jar. In front of them are two friars, standing facing one another and talking. The subject is of interest to students of Indian customs and manners.

The other scene, which represents the beating of the royal drum in the streets of the city after the restoration of the prince's eyes, has been painted in an imposing manner. There is a procession of elephants in the middle of the picture, around which footmen are seen marching with rapid strides. They are armed with spears, or curved swords and shields. One footman is carrying pots of water hung in slings from a bamboo. The large flags which are waving in the air add to the pomp and circumstance of the whole. On one elephant a prince is riding; he is wearing a crown, and there is also an umbrella over his head. He may be Prince Śibi, and the scene may represent his glorious return from the lake, whither he had retired, to the capital of his kingdom. This scene appears to have been painted by the same artist as the one who did the March of an Army in the *Sutasoma Jātaka* (Plates XXX and XXXI *b*), for there is much affinity between the two scenes in regard to the different units of the army, the accoutrements of the soldiers, and the style of marching.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, iv, 251.

<sup>2</sup> The roof of this gate is barrel-shaped like that of a *chaitya*, and the openings at the ends also resemble the horseshoe-shaped windows of the *chaityas*.

<sup>3</sup> In India, either through fear of contamination or the rigour of the caste-system, water is poured for the thirsty into the hollow of their joined hands, or into cups improvised from the leaves of trees. Food also, even at large banquets, is for similar reasons served in dishes made of leaves which are afterwards destroyed.

<sup>4</sup> On the upper part of the wall just below the ceiling another scene is painted which, owing to the blackening of the fresco, cannot be identified with certainty. It may

be connected with the *Śibi Jātaka* or may represent some other story. Describing the scene as far as it can be traced in the present condition of the fresco, if a beginning is made from the left side, first an *arhat* is seen, who, as is suggested by the position of his legs, is flying in the air and bringing offerings to the Great Being. Proceeding towards the right, a *rājā* and his consort with two attendants may be seen. Farther to the right the royal couple may be noticed again, this time adoring the Buddha, who is accompanied by an attendant (Bodhisattva). The figure of the Buddha is in the middle of the wall, above the cell-door. To the right of the Bodhisattva four more persons can be made out who seem to be talking together, because their

# THE MRIGA JĀTAKA, OR THE STORY OF THE GOLDEN DEER

## Plate LXVIII a-c

*The story is painted on the wall of the front corridor, near the second window, to the right of the door, in Cave XVII.*

THE subject painted on the rock-wall at Ajanta may be identified as the *Ruru Jātaka*,<sup>1</sup> except for the miracle of the hunter's hands being cut off when attempting to capture the golden deer, and their restoration afterwards by the divine benevolence of the sacred animal. This incident is clearly shown in the original painting at Ajanta, but is not mentioned in the *Jātaka*. The painting contains three scenes, the first representing Queen Khemā relating her dream of the golden deer to the king, and his issuing a proclamation in response to which a man appears at the king's court and states his readiness to guide him to the place where the golden deer lives. The second scene, painted near the bottom of the fresco, shows that the hunter had both his hands miraculously cut off when attempting to seize the horns of the golden deer in order to capture him. The third scene, which is painted in the middle, repre-

faces are turned towards one another. The artist has given them different complexions, one of them being dark green (shining black) like the jungle tribesmen. Farther towards the right the same rājā, or another, is shown seated on the throne with some attendants around him. At the end of the fresco, in the same direction, two more human figures may be traced and also a bull (the vehicle of Śiva). As the bull is already represented in a scene connected with the *Sibi Jātaka* (Plate LXVI c), it is possible that this scene also is connected with the same *Jātaka*.

<sup>1</sup> A summary of the *Ruru Jātaka*, No. 482 (iv, 161-5) is given here:

Once upon a time the Bodhisattva was born as a deer, and lived near the bend of a river. His skin was of a golden colour, and he also had a very sweet voice. One night he heard the cry of a man who was about to be drowned in the river, and he went down to the place and said, 'Ho, man! have no fear! I will save you alive.' Then he swam to the man and bore him to the bank, and afterwards set him on the road to Benares, whence he had come. The deer, however, bade him not to tell the king or any great man that at such a place lived a golden deer. The man promised to observe the command of the deer and not to make known his abode. On the day when the rescued man reached Benares the queen, Khemā, had a dream in which a golden deer preached the Law to her. She related her dream to the king, who proclaimed a reward of one thousand pieces of money with a casket of gold and a richly caparisoned elephant for the person who would give him information about the golden deer. When the rescued man heard the proclamation, he approached the courtier

who was making the announcement and said to him, 'I can bring the king news of such a deer; take me into his presence.' The courtier conducted the man to the king, who was pleased to know that he could show the place where the golden deer lived. Afterwards the traitor led the king, accompanied by a large escort, to the place where the deer was to be found. Presently the king saw the golden deer and was just about to shoot an arrow at him; but the Great Being checked him in his resolve, addressing him thus:

'O Lord of charioteers, great king, stand still! and do not wound:

Who brought the news to you, that here this deer was to be found?'

The king 'was enchanted with the honey voice' of the deer, who also informed him about the ingratitude of the man whom he had saved from being drowned, and who through greed had disclosed to the king the place where he lived. The king was filled with anger and wanted to kill the traitor instead of giving him any reward, but the Great Being thought, 'I would not have him perish on my account', and uttered these lines:

'Shame on the fool, O king, indeed!  
But no good men approve a killing;  
Let the wretch go, and give his meed.'

Afterwards the king took the Great Being to the city of Benares, which was beflagged and decorated in his honour, and requested him to discourse to the queen his wife. The Great Being graciously preached the Law to the queen, 'and afterwards to the king and all his court'.

PLATE LXVIII *a-c*

sents the return of the king with the golden deer, who is being carried in a chariot as a royal being, with an umbrella held over his head.

Beginning with the first scene, and commencing from the top left side, first a horse with a groom is noticed outside the gate of the court-building. In the middle of the court-room the king and queen are shown sitting on thrones, and the queen is relating her dream to the king. To suggest that the king will immediately issue a proclamation in the city that whosoever gives information about the golden deer will be rewarded, a drummer is shown standing near the right end of the court. Behind the drummer two other men may be seen, either belonging to the drummer's party, or else wayfarers. On the corresponding side, towards the left, are two hunters armed with bows and arrows. Quivers are tied on their backs with a pair of leather straps or strings. The features of one of them resemble those of a *Bhil* (Plate LXVIII *a*). There are five men sitting on the ground in front of the thrones of the king and the queen. The gestures of their fingers indicate that they are astonished by the dream of the queen, and are wondering whether a deer who can preach the Law really exists. The painter has given a different arrangement to the fingers of each of these five men, evidently to suggest that their opinions are not unanimous in the matter. On the right side of the king's throne are four hermits or mendicants with long hair and uncouth features. Behind the throne on the right side are two female attendants, one of a fair complexion and the other dark. The former holds a fly-whisk. Lower down, to the right of the two women, are the royal guards, one of them holding a long staff and others armed with straight swords.

The second episode of the story is shown in the bottom scene, where the king, accompanied by two of his officers and other men of his retinue including the hunters, arrives at the place where the golden deer lives, and the man who guides the king raises up his arm to suggest that the monarch should stop moving forward since he (the guide) has caught sight of the deer. The king is riding on a horse accompanied by two of his officers, who are also on horse-back; all three may be seen behind the guide, who has raised his arms in the air. The head of the horse behind the king's steed, which is turned aside, is painted in a very vivid style, and the head of the groom shown behind the king's horse should also be noticed. Farther on, the king may be seen advancing on foot towards the golden deer with two men of his party. He is struck with wonder when he sees that the man who tried to catch the deer by his horns had his hands miraculously cut off. The cut-off hands are lying in front of the deer. The hands seem to have been restored afterwards, because the man who was thus punished is looking back appealingly at the king, whose gaze indicates astonishment. The figure of the man who has been punished is a masterly piece of drawing, showing the artist's vivid imagination and consummate skill in giving a most effective pose to the subject. He is sitting on the ground in an attitude of reverence before the sacred deer, his knees and toes touching the ground while his head is turned towards the king, as if he is addressing him. The figure of the deer is also shown in a realistic manner, the expression of the eyes and the position of the forelegs, one of them being bent at the knee, suggesting that the animal has been frightened and is about to run away. There is another deer behind the golden deer, which may be his mate. A lion is shown in a cavern in the hills above, watching the incident enacted below.

#### AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

The middle scene is the most effective, and the fresco is also in a comparatively better state of preservation at that place. The king is returning to the city with the royal escort which had accompanied him when he went to capture the golden deer. At the back are two large elephants whose pinkish foreheads are bedecked with ornamental disks. The king is riding on a white steed and an attendant is holding an umbrella over his head. There are two other noblemen, riding on horses, being the aides who accompanied the king when he went out to hunt. There are also three hunters armed with bows and arrows and holding dogs in a leash. Together with the hunters some guards may also be seen who are armed with curved swords. Three of them are by the side of the king's horse and three more in front, immediately behind the chariot in which the golden deer is being carried. An attendant, who is carrying a flagon of water and a branch of a tree with leaves on it, may also be seen behind the chariot. The deer is standing in an imposing manner in the chariot, while a canopy is seen stretched above him and a royal flag unfurled over his head. The chariot has a balustrade of carved wood on which designs representing *chaitya*-windows and doorways are carved. The wheels of the chariot are strongly built and carefully finished, whilst an interesting feature is a strong rope tied to one of the wheels and connected with a pulley fixed into the frame of the chariot, near the seat of the driver, who could thus tighten the rope so as to make it act as a brake and stop the chariot.

In this subject, besides the figures of elephants, horses, and deer, which, as usual, are very skilfully and realistically drawn, the poses and the facial features of some of the hunters, who are apparently aborigines, may also interest the student.

#### THE STORY OF A BENEVOLENT BEAR NOT IDENTIFIED

Plate LXIX a-b

*The story is painted on the wall of the front corridor, between the two windows to the right of the door in Cave XVII.*

THE painting represents another deer-story in which a bear out of reverence and affection for the sacred deer helps in his release from a trap laid by a hunter. The hunter in revenge causes the death of the bear by inducing two fellow hunters to shoot arrows at the beast. There are many stories in the *Jataka* regarding the birth of the Bodhisattva as a deer and his betrayal by the man whose life the Bodhisattva had saved from one peril or another, but there is no story in which a bear comes to the help of the Sacred Being. The fresco is much blackened by the passage of time and other causes, and the figures represented are not very clear, but an artist's eye can trace the main incidents of the story (Plate LXIX a-b). For instance, in the lower part of the fresco, on the right side of the painting, the figure of a man with a fair complexion and long, unkempt hair may be descried. He is probably the hunter. In front of him is a stag lying trapped in a snare laid by the hunter, and close to

PLATE LXIX *a-b*

the stag, whose head is clear, a bear may be noticed hugging a man (Plate LXIX *b*).<sup>1</sup> This man has a fair complexion, and he is probably the hunter who had laid the snare. Towards the left is a pair of deer, one of whom is apparently the stag who has escaped from the snare by the timely help of the bear, who held the hunter in the embrace of his forepaws. The hunter, being foiled in his attempt to capture the sacred deer, asks two of his fellow hunters who are armed with bows and arrows to shoot the bear. These hunters may be noticed a little above on the right side of the painting. One of the hunters has evidently drawn his bow and shot an arrow, because on the opposite side of the picture the bear is lying wounded by an arrow which may be seen stuck into his body.<sup>2</sup>

Higher up (Plate LXIX *a*) is the figure of the hunter, who has been deprived of his hands as a punishment for his evil deed. Close by is the dead body of the bear, whose muzzle and exposed teeth represent a fine piece of realistic work. Below, on either side of the dead bear, are men who are expressing their sorrow at the incident, as is suggested by the gestures of their fingers. One of them, as a further mark of grief, has placed his hand on his head. Behind the hunter who has lost his hands two of his accomplices may be seen running away through fear of punishment. Above, on the left side of the fresco, there are two more figures of men, one of them of a large size, because it is represented as standing near the principal characters of the story, and the other comparatively small, being supposed to be at some distance from the main scene. The large figure, who has a ruddy complexion, probably represents some wayfarer in the forest, and is shown carrying a bamboo across his shoulders from which a log is hung. The other figure represents another wayfarer, who is armed with a bow and arrow and is carrying faggots on his head.

THE *NIGRODHAMIGA JĀTAKA*, OR THE STORY OF THE SACRED DEER WHO OFFERED HIMSELF AS A SUBSTITUTE TO SAVE THE LIFE OF A DOE

*Plates L b, LXIX c, and LXX a-b*

*The jātaka is painted on the wall of the front corridor, between the door and the second window on the right, in Cave XVII.*

THE painting represents five episodes, all mentioned in the *Jātaka* version (i, 39-42),<sup>3</sup> but as the fresco is badly damaged in its lower part previous scholars have not been able to identify certain scenes. Beginning from the door side and proceeding towards the first window, a scene may be noticed in which a herd of thirteen deer is represented. There are

<sup>1</sup> Griffiths has given a reconstruction of this subject in *Ajanta Paintings*, vol. i, p. 13, Fig. 28.

<sup>2</sup> The figure of the bear can be made out in the reproduction (Plate LXIX *b*), but it is much clearer in the original fresco.

<sup>3</sup> The story given in the *Jātaka* (i, 39-42) may be summarized as follows:

Once the Bodhisattva was born as a deer and dwelt in the forest, attended by five hundred other deer. He was called the King Banyan Deer. In the vicinity lived another deer who had an equally large attendant herd, and he was styled the Branch Deer. The king of Benares at that time was passionately fond of hunting and had venison served to him at every meal. 'Every day he mustered the whole

### AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

two stags, one of great size, with a spotted hide; he may be the Banyan Deer of the story (Plate L 6). The other stag, whose head is damaged, only the horns being visible, may be the first deer's companion, the Branch Deer. There are several young fawns close to their mothers, who are sitting or standing in characteristic attitudes. The herd is shown in the midst of a forest, or 'the king's pleasance', with belts of hills in the background. On a crag a lion (?) is perched. Among the trees the banyan and the teak can easily be identified by their leaves. There is a gap in the fresco owing to the peeling off of the painted layer from the rock-wall, but the scene seems to continue on the top and the figure of a rājā is clear in the painting. He is riding on a horse whose head is visible although his body is destroyed. The heads of two attendants can also be described. The rājā is dressed in a full-sleeved coat (*angrakhā*) of silk brocade (*jāniwār*), a fabric which is still manufactured in Aurangābād. On the hills shown in the background four monkeys may be seen, one of whom is frowning at the other three. One of the latter, through fright, has taken shelter under the neck and breast of one of his companions. On the right side two peafowl with long tail-feathers and gorgeous plumes may be seen sitting on crags of conventionally represented hills. A little higher is a tree with rich foliage shown in bloom. At the back of the tree is a gate with a barrel-shaped roof. As the rājā shown lower in the scene has probably emerged from the gate, and as the royal chamber to be described presently is shown in the painting immediately above this scene, the subject may safely be identified as 'the pleasance' of the king, which must have been in the close vicinity of the palace and to which the rājā, according to the *Jātaka*, often resorted to shoot deer.<sup>1</sup>

Above, the painter has delineated several buildings of the palace, among which the one immediately above the last scene is the royal chamber (Plate LXX 6). It is a pillared room, richly decked with tassels and curtains, which may be seen on the walls and also below the ceiling. The rājā is shown sitting on a throne with his consort, who is on his right hand. There is a lady standing behind the rānī and another sitting on the ground near the feet of the rājā and looking attentively at the royal pair. The poses of both ladies are very graceful, but as the fresco has become very black they cannot be discerned in the reproduction. In of his subjects, to the detriment of their business, and went hunting.' His people thought that as their work suffered on account of their daily excursions with the king they had better manage so that the deer should graze in the king's own pleasance and that they themselves should drive into it a sufficient number of deer from the forest so that the king might have his daily meal of venison from them. The subjects and their king accordingly made this arrangement, and the deer driven to the pleasance included the King Banyan Deer and the Branch Deer. The king, when he resorted to his pleasance, noticed the Banyan Deer and the Branch Deer, both of whom were of a golden hue, and considering them too beautiful to be shot he told his servants not to kill them. Afterwards the king himself went regularly to the pleasance and shot a deer, or else his cook went and shot one. But in these attempts

several deer were wounded and afterwards died. To avoid this disaster the Banyan Deer and the Branch Deer decided that lots should be cast to select a daily victim. Once the lot fell on a pregnant doe, and when the Banyan Deer heard of this he offered himself as a substitute and went to the place of slaughter and laid down his head on the block. The cook recognized the golden deer to whom immunity had been granted by the king and informed the latter of the incident. The king was much impressed by the spirit of 'charity, love, and pity' shown by the Banyan Deer, and he not only spared the life of the Banyan Deer but also granted immunity to the lives of all creatures. The Banyan Deer afterwards 'established the king in the Five Commandments'. Cf. *Mahāvastu*, i, 359, and *Sutrālankāra*, No. 70.

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, i, 39.

PLATES L<sub>b</sub>, LXIX<sub>c</sub> & LXX<sub>a-b</sub>

front of the throne are, as usual, two dwarfs wearing rich ornaments. The head of one of them is turned half-way towards the front, while the other shows only his back and is facing the rājā and rānī. The sage of the court (the brahman minister) may be seen sitting on a low chair at one side of the throne. On the steps leading into the room a servant or cook is reporting something to a maid who is standing between the two pillars on the right side of the royal chamber. The servant has knelt down reverentially while addressing the royal maid. He may be the cook come to report about the charitable action of the golden stag whose life the king had declared to be immune.

To the left of the royal chamber is a *shāmyānah* under which a stag is shown sitting on a throne. But before describing this scene it will be best to narrate the events which the artist has represented in the kitchen-scene painted at the extreme left side of the fresco (Plate LXX<sub>a</sub>). The kitchen is a thatched building supported by wooden pillars. The roof slopes on both sides and rests on a framework of timber. Connected with the kitchen is a pillared apartment, which may either be the porch or a small dining-room attached to the kitchen. A stag can be seen standing in this apartment near the steps to which the king has gone after hearing the report of the cook (?). The king is accompanied by the sage of the court, the gesture of whose fingers indicates that he is saying something to the king. The two dwarfs of the court have also come with the king, and one of them, who is a female, has a small basket slung on her back. Close to this female dwarf there is a little girl who has brought flowers as an offering to the sacred deer. Behind her is the stalwart figure of a male attendant, who is holding the royal umbrella over the king.

The pose of the king indicates dignity combined with solicitude. It may be of interest to quote here the portion of the *Jātaka* regarding the conversation which took place between the king and the Banyan Deer:

*King*: 'My friend the king of the deer, did I not promise you your life? How comes it that you are lying here?'

*Banyan Deer*: 'Sire, there came to me a doe big with young, who prayed me to let her turn fall on another; and, as I could not pass the doom of one to another, I, laying down my life for her and taking her doom on myself, have laid me down here.'

The stag in the kitchen-building is shown as if he has laid himself down and placed his neck on the block for slaughter. The figure of the stag has been painted with realistic effect. In front of the stag is the cook sitting on a low stool. He is surprised by the spirit of sacrifice shown by the sacred deer and sends a man to report the matter to the king, as has been mentioned already. Behind the cook is a servant who is placing sticks in an oven. There are several sets of pots arranged one above the other, and also big jars with lids above them. On one of these jars a tray is placed which contains bananas, probably raw, beans (or *chilīs*), and *karelas* (*Momordica charantia*). Below, a bunch of three *mūlīs* (radishes) with green leaves may also be seen. Pots are also hung in slings from the beams of the building. The design and the rope-work of the slings are of interest. In the kitchen behind the cook there is a maid, and close to her a male servant who has not realized the spirit of sacrifice of the Banyan Deer and holds his hands close to the horns of the deer lest he should attempt to run away.

#### AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

The kitchen-building and its equipment are extremely plain and show a great contrast to the pomp and grandeur to be noticed in the rich ornaments and costumes, the brilliant royal processions, and the impressive military expeditions.

Between the royal chamber and the kitchen-building, a *shāmiyānā* can be seen under which a stag (the Banyan Deer) is sitting on a throne and probably teaching the king and queen the Five Commandments. The king and queen, full of respect for the Bodhisattva, are sitting on the ground and listening with great attention to his sermon. Among the audience are also two maids of the court, shown standing behind, and a male servant who is sitting on the ground near the feet of the king. He appears to be an aboriginal, and his features and the way in which he has decorated the hair of his head with flowers are noteworthy.

The last scene of the story is painted in the upper part of the wall above the first window to the right of the door (Plate LXIX *c*). It shows a forest with a *stūpa* at its left end, and a large number of birds and four-footed animals, including deer, assembled before the *stūpa* to acknowledge their gratitude to the Bodhisattva through whose intercession the king of Benares had granted immunity to the lives of all creatures.<sup>1</sup> Through the heat and smoke of the fires of the *yogīs* who lived in the cave up to comparatively recent times the fresco has become very black and all the colours have been burnt out, but the figures of the deer, a *chītal*,<sup>2</sup> and a large variety of birds, chiefly aquatic, can be made out. The deer are shown running, the *chītal* is in a state of fright, and the birds take up different characteristic poses which exhibit the artist's careful study of the habits and movements of birds, and also his skill in painting them faithfully. The flock of storks, cranes, geese, and ducks in the middle of the painting is particularly worth notice. Among the trees the *palāśa* ('flame of the forest'), the teak, and the *samālū* (*Vitex trifolia*) can easily be recognized by their leaves.

#### TWO DWARFS WITH MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

##### Plate LXXI *b*

*The subject is painted on the base of a pillar of the ante-chamber in Cave XVII.*

THE columns and pilasters of this *vihāra* are beautifully painted, the subjects being floral designs, mythical animals, and scenes representing court life. A few floral designs and a pair of mythical animals are reproduced in Plate I *a-d*, and may give the art-critic an idea of the imagination and the technical skill of the painter. The Royal Guard (Plate II *c*) and the Toilet Scene (Plate LXIV *b*) already described in detail (on p. 82 and pp. 95-96, respectively) throw considerable light on the court-life of the period. The present subject (Plate LXXI *b*) is also connected with court-life, showing two rollicking minstrels, one playing on a triangular stringed instrument, and the other holding a double drum under his left arm. The mouths of both are open, which suggests that they are either singing or laughing. Both of them are dwarfs and have large paunches, small fat legs, thick lips, and dumpy noses.

<sup>1</sup> *Jātaka*, i, 40.

<sup>2</sup> A spotted deer, larger in size than the ordinary species and having a long neck.

PLATES LXXI *a* & *c-d*, & LXXII-LXXIV *a-b*

Their mirthful expressions add to the comic effect of the composition. The colours are indeed insignificant; it is the drawing that has made the subject so charming.

## FLORAL DESIGNS AND OTHER MOTIFS

### Plates LXXI *a* and *c-d*, and LXXII-LXXIV *a-b*

*The designs are painted on the ceilings of the hall and the corridors of Cave XVII.*

THE ceiling of this *vihāra*, like its walls and columns, is lavishly painted, the designs comprising floral patterns, fancy creeper-motifs, and mythical animals. The subjects reproduced in the above plates are only a few out of a vast array, but the selection which has been made may give the connoisseur an idea of the artist's play of fancy, love of ornamentation, and exquisite workmanship. For example, the design reproduced in Plate LXXI *a* has seven concentric ornamental bands with a circular pattern in the middle. The outermost band contains a jewellery pattern, the next a rich lotus creeper, with leaves, birds, and flowers artistically represented. Next to this, that is, third in the serial order, is again a jewellery design, showing pearl-strings with clasps at the ends, the latter being set with gems. The fourth represents a lotus-creeper, but here the design is different from that shown in the second band, for the artist has painted large cup-shaped leaves between the bunches of flowers. The fifth band contains a simple five-petal floral design, so that the eye of the onlooker may not be tired by a succession of too many intricate patterns. The sixth band contains a wavy design which is still in vogue even at the present day. The fresco being much damaged near the centre, the designs of the seventh band and the central panel cannot be determined with certainty. These seven circular concentric bands are enclosed in a square, and the space at the corners and around them has been cleverly filled up with pairs of celestial beings and artistically designed scrolls. The celestial beings are shown bringing offerings of flowers from heaven to the Buddha. The modelling of the male figure at the right corner, and the rapidity of movement suggested by the position of his legs, witness to a vigorous style of painting.

The panel shown in Plate LXXI *a*, described above, is further enclosed by decorative bands, among which one containing animal-heads and busts attached to ornamental scrolls is extremely pleasing (Plates LXXII-LXXIV *a-b*). The heads shown are of both real animals and fabulous creatures, the latter including a mermaid (Plate LXXII). The animals are most ingeniously shown sporting or fighting with one another, and the artist has tried to exhibit the characteristic features and habits of the various beasts represented. For example, in the top panel there is a fight between two cat-headed monsters, and the picture faithfully represents the way in which two ordinary cats fight with one another. The colour-schemes of these subjects also show a highly developed art, since the different colours are most harmoniously blended and most pleasant to the eye. Among the religious symbols the conch and lotus may be seen in the top panel of Plate LXXIV; the lotus (*padma*) was associated with Buddhism

#### AJANTA: EXPLANATORY TEXT

from the beginning of the Hīnayāna period, but the conch shows the influence of the Brahmanic faith, and must have been adopted as a religious symbol by the Buddhists when the Mahāyāna doctrine came into vogue.<sup>1</sup>

The ceilings of the corridors are also magnificently painted, and on the ceiling of the front corridor there is a design in which three peafowl are represented around a lotus creeper adorned with flowers and buds. The design is highly conventional; even the tail-feathers of the birds have been changed into ornamental scrolls, yet the position of their necks and other parts of the body are very characteristic of the habit and carriage of the peafowl (Plate LXXI d). Similarly, on the ceiling of the left corridor is delineated a lion to whose tail the painter has given an artistic loop. The raised head and the shape of the muzzle are also unreal, but the entire motif, set in a circle of the lotus-creeper, is extremely attractive, and shows well the ingenuity and taste of the artist. In this period (fifth century A.D.) the decorative aspect of art from the creative point of view reached its climax; afterwards, perhaps, there was a retrograde movement, whether for political or other reasons is not known.

#### LOTUS-CREEPERS AND OTHER DECORATIVE DESIGNS

##### Plate LXXIVc

*The designs are executed on the ceiling of the front corridor of Cave XXI.*

THE ceiling of this cave must originally have had a large number of exquisite designs, but as the fresco has been destroyed in several places through various causes, their beauty and variety can be admired only from the few fragments which have survived. The ceiling of the front corridor, on the right side, has a fairly large fragment intact which, besides floral, geometric, and other artistic patterns, shows a charming lotus-creeper in which the freshness of the blue colour is particularly striking. On the creeper there are also white flowers and buds, the delicate petals of which have been painted with great care. In the choice of colours, too, the artist's refined taste may be admired, the flowers being both white and blue, the stems green; while the creeper, with a view to throwing it into relief, has been painted on a dark background.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Conch and lotus combined are also painted on the ceiling of Cave II at Ajanta. Cf. Part II, Plate XLVII d. According to Coomaraswamy, a lotus and a conch associated with Kuvera are considered to signify his inexhaustible treasures. See *Yakṣas*, ii, 13.

<sup>2</sup> The ceiling of the right aisle of Cave XIX has also some charming creeper-designs among which dwarfish human figures are interspersed. There are also figures of the Buddha in different attitudes (*mudrās*) and a scene in which a lady with a child has been shown standing before the Buddha. The child is putting something into the Buddha's begging-bowl. Foucher has identified this sub-

ject with the story of 'Offering of a handful of dust to the Blessed One by the child which afterwards became Aśoka', *Jour. Hyd. Arch. Soc.*, No. 5, 1919–20, pp. 86–87. The porch of this cave has a panel in its ceiling representing five elephants. The grouping of the animals is ingenious, and two of them in the front are shown either fighting with each other or else caressing each other in a sportive mood, since their trunks are intertwined. The painting, however, does not show any vigour, and the disproportionately broad green key-pattern border has further weakened the artistic effect.

## THE BUDDHA PREACHING TO THE CONGREGATION

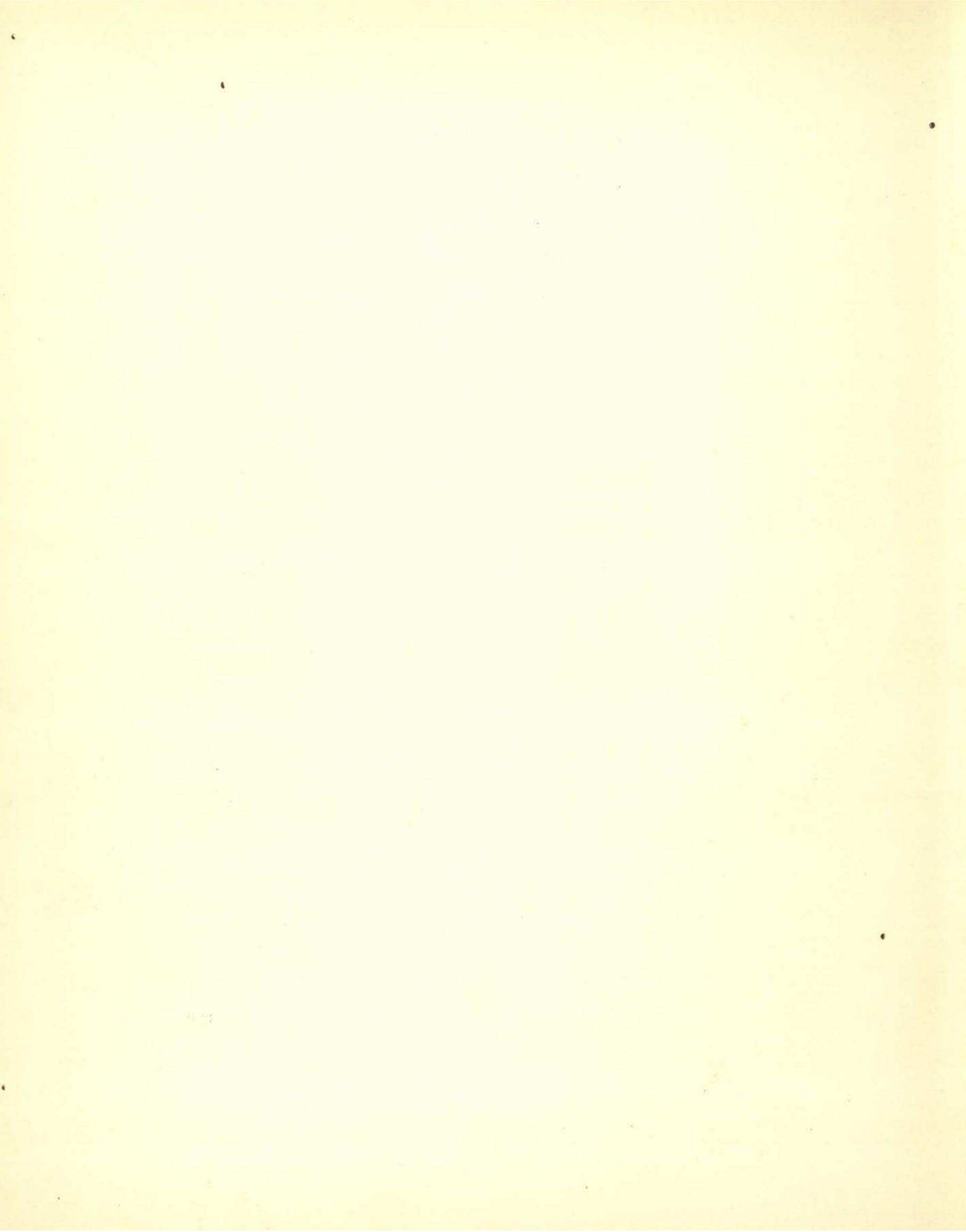
### Plate LXXVII b

*The scene is painted over the third cell-door in the left aisle of Cave XXII.*

AS the fresco is much damaged and the principal figures near the Buddha are not complete, it will be hazardous to identify the subject with any legend or event of the life of the Buddha. The Great Being is shown sitting on a throne with two royal attendants holding *chaurīs* in their hands. They may be Bodhisattvas. Towards the left of the throne were probably the figures of women, some of which appear to have been completed, but two of them were left incomplete, as can be seen near the end of the fresco. These figures are interesting as showing how the artist worked on the modelling by using pinkish washes before applying other colours, and inserting brush-lines which indicated costume, jewellery, and minor features of the body.<sup>1</sup> On the right side of the throne were probably male figures representing *devas*, some of whom appear to be dressed as princes and others as *bhikshus*.

In the fresco, as it is now, the pose of the two royal attendants and the modelling of the two female figures referred to above are the only artistic features worthy of notice.

<sup>1</sup> These incomplete figures are clear in the original which are quite faithful reproductions. *Ajanta Paintings*, fresco, and Griffiths has published hand-copies of them ii, Plate 155.



# APPENDIX

## NOTES ON THE PAINTED AND INCISED INSCRIPTIONS OF CAVES XX-XXVI

### THE PAINTED INSCRIPTIONS<sup>1</sup>

By Dr. N. P. CHAKRAVARTI

#### CAVE XX

In this cave there is no painted inscription of the same nature as those found in other caves, but here again there is an inscription in red paint in two lines on the left wall between the niche containing the figure of the Buddha and the second cell-door. The record is fatally damaged and only a few letters here and there can be deciphered: mere fragmentary remains from which it is not possible to deduce any intelligible meaning.

#### CAVE XXI

There is no painting anywhere in this cave, but there is an inscription in red paint and several lines of big letters on the back wall of the veranda between the door and the window. To the right is a similar record in five lines written cornerwise. The writing, which was made on the plaster covering the wall, is badly injured. The fourth line, however, seems to read:

[Dasa]ratha [ma\*?]ñḍaṇa

There are traces of another similar inscription on the same wall to the left where the writing was done horizontally.

It is perhaps not unlikely that it was originally intended to decorate this cave also with the usual mural paintings and that these records in red paint contained, for the guidance of the artists, the titles of particular scenes (perhaps from the *Dasaratha Jātaka* in the above instance) which were to be painted on a particular portion of the wall.

#### CAVE XXII

In this cave are the painted figures of eight Buddhas rendered on the left wall of the shrine. These Buddhas are seated under appropriate *Bodhi*-trees and their names are recorded below the figures, which show that they were the seven omniscient (*sarvajña*) Buddhas and the future Buddha Maitreya.<sup>2</sup> The names are: (1) Vipaśvī, (2) Śikhī, (3) Viśvabhū[ḥ], (4) [Krakuchchhandah\*],<sup>3</sup> (5) Ka[naka]muniḥ, (6) Kāśyapa[ḥ], (7) Śākyamuni[ḥ], and (8) Maitre[yah].

Above these Buddha figures and on top of each *Bodhi*-tree was also painted the name of every separate tree, each of which appertained, of course, to its own particular Buddha (Facsimile I). Of these only four names are now extant. Thus, above Śikhī we find puṇḍarīka,

<sup>1</sup> This is the continuation of his *Note* published in Part III (Text), pp. 85-96.

<sup>2</sup> This name is now altogether missing and has been supplied.

<sup>3</sup> Burgess, *Descriptive Notes*, No. 30, p. 88.

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above Krakuchchanda, śīrīshah, above Kanakamuni, udum[b\*]a[rah], and above Kaśyapa, nyagro[dhah\*].<sup>1</sup>

Below the seated figures of the Buddhas there is a painted record in two lines, which contains a dedicatory inscription, now only partly preserved, which is followed by a verse describing the merit accruing to those who dedicate an image of the Buddha.

1 [Siddham<sup>2</sup>] [|\*] <sup>3</sup>Deyadharma-yam śākyabhiksho[r\*]-ma[hā]yāna<sup>4</sup> -----  
-----  
[sarvvasatvā]<sup>5</sup>nām-anuttara-[jñā]n-āvāptaye | Sauru(rū)pya-  
saubhāgya-guṇ-opapāmnnā(pannā)<sup>6</sup> guṇ-endriye<sup>7</sup>  
bhāsvara-diptayas-te<sup>8</sup> [|\*] bhavarī(va)nti<sup>9</sup> te<sup>10</sup>  
nayan-ābhīramā |<sup>11</sup>

2 ye kārayam(ya)nt-iha Jinasya bi[m]ba[m] | [|\*]<sup>12</sup>

Success! This is the meritorious gift of the Śākyā monk, a follower of the Great Vehicle... for the attainment of supreme knowledge of all beings. Those who cause to be made an image of Jina (Buddha) become endowed with good looks, good luck, and (*good*) qualities, acquire resplendent brightness in right conclusion (*guṇa*) and insight, and become pleasing to the eye.

## THE INCISED INSCRIPTIONS

By DR. B. CH. CHHABRA

### GENERAL REMARKS

FIVE of the six inscriptions dealt with in this note have already been published by Bhagwanlal Indraji and James Burgess. One, occurring on the wall of the chapel between Caves XXVI and XXVII, is a subsequent discovery. Unlike the rest, it is in Prākrit and Sanskrit mixed, and is much later in date.

Cave XX has only one short votive inscription. It is fragmentary.

Cave XXVI has four inscriptions, of which one is a fairly long record. Its contents are discussed in some detail at its appropriate place. The other three are votive records, one of which is fragmentary.

The back wall of the chapel to the left of the court, in Cave XXVI, contains a longish inscription. The inscribed surface is rough and extremely weather-worn. The record belongs

<sup>1</sup> The names of Bodhi-trees have not been noticed by Burgess.

<sup>2</sup> Expressed by a symbol which has now disappeared but is clear in Burgess's plate.

<sup>3</sup> Vowel e sign in de is now effaced.

<sup>4</sup> Burgess's plate shows *Masharaśaila*, but an examination of the original shows that the reading may have been the usual *Mahāyāna-yāyināḥ*, &c., found in this formula. The plaster has peeled off completely after this, but a few letters are visible on Burgess's plate which can be read as *niyasya mātā-pitrī* -----.

<sup>5</sup> This portion has been supplied from Burgess's plate.

<sup>6</sup> Burgess *pannā*, but the reading is clearly *paminnā*.

<sup>7</sup> Reading in Burgess <sup>9</sup>yair-bhā<sup>9</sup>, but the plate shows the reading given by me.

<sup>8</sup> Burgess's text and plate give *ṣṭe*, but the reading is clearly *ste*.

<sup>9</sup> Burgess omits *anusvāra* above *va*, but it is clear in the original inscription.

<sup>10</sup> Read *chaite*.

<sup>11</sup> *Danda* unnecessary.

<sup>12</sup> See also under inscription No. 8, Cave X.

## CAVE XX

to the Rāshtrakūṭas. It has not been possible to decipher the entire inscription. Yet the portion which has been made out is of some importance.

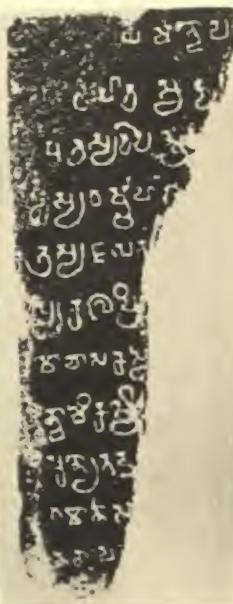
None of the records is dated. The Rāshtrakūṭa record can be placed in the eighth or the ninth century A.D. on palaeographical grounds, whilst the others belong to a period ranging from A.D. 450 to A.D. 525.

## CAVE XX

The subjoined fragmentary Sanskrit inscription occurs on the pilaster at the left end of the veranda in Cave XX. It has been edited by Bhagwanlal Indraji and James Burgess.<sup>1</sup> The inscription has suffered further damage since their time, as a comparison between the facsimile published here and the one published in the *A.S.W.I.*, vol. iv, will show.



Inscription in its present condition



Facsimile published in  
*A.S.W.I.*, vol. iv, Pl.  
LVIII, No. 5

My reading is based on the latter as well as on an examination of the original.

## TEXT

- 1 ----- ya[m]<sup>2</sup> maṇḍapa -----
- 2 ----- pautrasya [Kṛi]<sup>3</sup> -----
- 3 ----- putrasya<sup>4</sup> Upendra[sya] -----
- 4 ----- sya dharmma-haga<sup>5</sup> -----
- 5 ----- trasya jayatām -----

<sup>1</sup> Burgess, *Descriptive Notes*, pp. 76-77, No. 5 (where *Cave XXII* is obviously a mistake for *Cave XX*); *A.S.W.I.*, vol. iv, p. 132, No. 5, and Plate LVIII, No. 5.

<sup>2</sup> This may be restored as *deyadharma-yam* following

Bhagwanlal Indraji.

<sup>3</sup> This letter may be read also as *ksha*.

<sup>4</sup> The *sandhi* has not been observed here.

<sup>5</sup> The reading of these two letters is doubtful.

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- 6 - - - [sya] kula-pri<sup>1</sup> - - - - -  
 7 - - - mo[pā]saka[sya]<sup>2</sup> - - - - -  
 8 - - - nvāmikasyeau - - - - -  
 9 - - - punyanetad<sup>3</sup> - - - - -  
 10 - - - gamā - - - - -

### TRANSLATION

This *mandapa* is [*the meritorious gift of*] Upendra, son of . . ., grandson of . . .,<sup>4</sup> Whatever merit is here, may that be for the attainment of the supreme knowledge by all the sentient beings, beginning with the (*donor's*) father and mother.

### CAVE XXVI

Cave XXVI contains the following four inscriptions, all in Sanskrit.

No. 1. This is the longest of all. It is engraved on the back wall of the façade, over the doorway on the right side. It has already been edited by both Bhagwanlal Indraji and James Burgess.<sup>5</sup> It consists of 17 lines, not 27 as misprinted in the *Descriptive Notes* by Burgess. The inscribed surface has been damaged a little, as a result of which portions of the text in lines 1 and 15-17 have been lost to us (Facsimile II). The composition of the record is metrical throughout, there being altogether 19 verses in various metres. Its language contains expressions that are peculiar to Buddhist literature, and here and there shows the influence of Pāli. The record is not dated, but palaeographically it can be placed between A.D. 450 and A.D. 525.<sup>6</sup>

A comparison of the text and translation presented below will show that they differ in some respects from those given by Bhagwanlal Indraji and James Burgess.

The object of the inscription is to record the excavation of the rock-hewn temple, evidently Cave XXVI itself, by a Buddhist *bhikshu*, Buddhabhadra by name. The work was supervised by one of his pupils, Bhadrabandhu by name, and another monk, named Dharmadatta. Buddhabhadra, the record states, was a close friend of Bhavvirāja, the minister of the king of Aśmaka. At the time of the construction of the cave-temple, Bhavvirāja had passed away. His son, Devarāja, had succeeded him as minister of the said king. Buddhabhadra assigns the merit of the pious act to his friend as well as to his own parents.

The name of the king of Aśmaka is not mentioned. In the inscription in Cave XVII a line of kings feudatory to the Vākātakas is mentioned. Ravisāmba and his elder brother (name lost), sons of Kṛishṇadāsa, of this feudatory line, are stated therein to have conquered

<sup>1</sup> The letter *ku* is quite clear in the facsimile published here, but in the one published in the *A.S.W.L.*, vol. iv, it looks like simple *ka*.

<sup>2</sup> Perhaps we had here *paramopāsakaṣya*.

<sup>3</sup> The restoration suggested by Bhagwanlal Indraji may be accepted: *yad-atra punyanetad-bhavatu mātā-pitri-pūrvamangamānām sakala-sattvānām-anuttara-jñān-āvāptaye*.

<sup>4</sup> Owing to the gaps in the text, it is not possible to give a translation of the further portions, though in line 6 there

is a reference to a family (*kula*) and in line 7 to a great lay-worshipper (*paramopāsaka*).

<sup>5</sup> Burgess, *Descriptive Notes*, pp. 77-79, No. 6; *A.S.W.L.*, vol. iv, No. 6, and Plate LVIII, No. 6.

<sup>6</sup> Burgess placed the record in 'the later half of the sixth or beginning of the seventh century A.D.' This date, however, would seem to be too late, taking account of the archaic forms of certain letters—the tripartite form of *y*, for instance—noticeable in the inscription.

## CAVE XXVI

and ruled over Aśmaka.<sup>1</sup> We learn further from that inscription that Ravisāmba predeceased this elder brother, who after the demise of his younger brother led a very pious life. Cave XVII was excavated by him. He was contemporary of the Vākāṭaka emperor Harisheṇa (*circa* A.D. 475–500). Considering the approximate date of our inscription, we may presume that it was either Ravisāmba's elder brother himself or the latter's son and successor who was king of Aśmaka at the time of the excavation of Cave XXVI.

Buddhabhadra evidently followed in the footsteps of *Sthavira Muni Achala* in building the cave-temple. Verse 6 of the inscription states that Achala had built a similar *saila-gṛīha* (rock dwelling) of the Lord Buddha. Achala has been identified with A-chē-lo mentioned by the celebrated Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang,<sup>2</sup> who visited India between A.D. 621 and A.D. 645. From his description it appears that Achala's work, at the time when he saw it, was already of a long past date.

### TEXT

[Metres: Verse 1 *Drutavilambita*; vv. 2 and 4 *Aupachchandasika*; vv. 3 and 10 *Upajāti* (*Indravajrā* and *Upendravajrā* combined); v. 5 *Vasantatilakā*; vv. 6, 7, and 8 *Āryā*; v. 9 *Vaṁśasthabila*; vv. 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, and 19 *Anushṭubh*; v. 16 *Upajāti* (*Vasantatilakā*, *Indravajrā*, and *Upendravajrā* combined); v. 17 *Śikharinī*; v. 18 *Śārdūlavikrīdita*.]

- 1 Siddham<sup>3</sup> [||\*] Jayati loka-hit-āvahit-odyato ~ ~ sukh-ā ~ karaḥ paramārttha-vit-tri-<sup>4</sup> vidha-nirmala-sarvva-guṇ-odayo Muni[r=a-bhi]<sup>5</sup> karuṇ-āmala-chandrikāḥ [||1||\*]
- 2 Punar-<sup>6</sup>api maraṇ-ādi yena samyag-<sup>7</sup>jitaṁ-ajar-āmara-dharmmatā cha labdhā[|\*] śivam-abhayam-anālayam gato-pi praśama-puram jagatām karoti ch-ārttha[m || 2 ||\*]
- 3 Tato namaskāra-guṇ-ābhidhānam<sup>6</sup> bhavaty-avandhyam vipulam mah-ārttham [|] pradattam-ekam kusumam cha yatra svargg-āpavargg-ākhyā-phalasya hetuh [|| 3 ||\*]
- 4 Ata iha vidushā Tathāgateshu prathita-guṇ-ādhika-loka-vatsaleshu [|\*] kṛitam-anusaratā janena kāryyā drava-karuṇā-hṛidayeshv-ati-
- 5 va<sup>7</sup> bhakti[h\*] || [4 ||\*] Devā nirasta-vijayā-sa-vipattikatvāch-chhāpena Śāmbhur-<sup>8</sup>api kāchara-lochano-bhūt || () Krishṇo-vaśo-pi vaśam-āpatito-ntakasya tasmāj-jayaṁti
- 6 Sugatā bhaya-vipramuktāḥ || [5 ||\*] Sthavir-Āchalena muninā śāsanam-udbhāvayam<sup>8</sup> kṛitajñena [|\*] kṛita-kṛityen-āpi satā śaila-gṛīham kāritam sāstuh || [6 ||\*]
- 7 Prāg-ēva bodhisatvair-bhava-sukha-kāmai-cha moksha-kāmai-cha [|\*] saṁvidyamāna-vibhavaiḥ katham na kāryyā bhavet-kīrttiḥ || [7 ||\*] Yāvat-kīrtti-<sup>9</sup>lloke tāvat-svargge-
- 8 shu modati cha dehī [|\*] chandr-ārkka-kāla-kalpā kāryyā kīrtti-mahidhreshu || [8 ||\*] Aneka-janm-ātta(nta)ra-baddha-sauhṛidaṁ sthiram kṛitajñam sudhiyam vipaśchitam [|\*]

<sup>1</sup> *Hyd. Arch. Ser.*, No. 15 (Inscription in Cave XVII at Ajanta, by V. V. Mirashi), Hyderabad, 1949, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *A.S.W.I.*, vol. iv, p. 133. See also *On Yuan Chwang's Travels in India*, by Thomas Watters, edited by T. W. Rhys Davids and S. W. Bushell, London, 1905, vol. ii, p. 239, giving Yuan Chwang's description of Achala's monastery with 'its lofty halls and deep chambers . . . quarried in the cliff'

<sup>3</sup> Expressed by a symbol.

<sup>4</sup> Read -vit[|\*] tri-. In fact, after the syllable *vi*, there is a damaged letter which may have been a mute *t*. In that case we had better read -vi[t] [|\*] ttri, the *t* preceding *r* in *tri* having been duplicated. The facsimile in *A.S.W.I.*,

vol. iv, Plate LVIII, No. 6, shows a blank space after *vi*.

<sup>5</sup> Read *Munir-a-bhiḥ*. The reading given by Bhagwanlal Indraji is *mu[shita]bhiḥ?*, which has been accepted by James Burgess, who deletes the query-mark.

<sup>6</sup> The engraver evidently first engraved a mute *m* after *na* and then, erasing it, he engraved an *anusvāra*, which is seen a little aside, below *sa* of *samyag* in line 2 above.

<sup>7</sup> The position of the letter *va*, in the margin away from the alinement, shows that it was first omitted and was later supplied.

<sup>8</sup> Read *udbhāvayat*, as suggested by Bhagwanlal Indraji.

## APPENDIX

- 9 sur-āsur-āchāryyā(ryya)-mateshu kovidam mahānubhāv-Āśmaka-rāja-mantriṇam || [9 \*\*]  
Lokajñam-ekānta-Samantabhadram sarvv-ārtthinām-arttha-karam suvāchaṁ [\*\*] guṇ-onnatam  
praśraya-
- 10 [na]mra-m[ū]rttim khyātim gataṁ sach-charitaiḥ pri(pri)thivyām || [10 \*\*] Daṇḍa-sāddhyāni  
kāryyāṇi vyāyām-aika-rasāny-api [\*\*] yaś-sādhayati sāmn-aiva nri(nṛi)pater-mantri(ntri)-pum'ṅ-  
gava[ḥ\*] || [11 \*\*] Ittham-
- 11 bhūto-sya putro-pi Devarājo dhuramddharah [\*\*] pitaryy-uparate yena padam-unnāmitam  
guṇaiḥ || [12 \*\*] Tam Bhavvirājam-uddisya mātā-pitaram-eva cha<sup>2</sup> [\*\*] bhikshuṇā Buddha-  
bhadrēṇa
- 12 kāritah Sugat-ā[layam<sup>3</sup>] || [13 \*\*] Āgamya Dharmmadattam chcha(cha) bhikshum sach-chhi-  
shyam-eva cha [\*\*] Bha<sup>4</sup>drabu(ba)ndhum-idam veśma tābhyaṁ nishpāditam cha me || [14 \*\*]  
Yad-atra puṇyām tat-teshā[m]
- 13 jagatām cha bhavatv-idam [\*\*] sarvv-āmala-guṇa-vyāta<sup>5</sup>-mahābodhi-phal-āptaye || [15 \*\*] Yo  
Buddha-śāsana-gatim samabuddhya<sup>6</sup> jāto bhikshur-vya(r-vva)yasy-abhinave-bhijan-opapanna-  
[ḥ \*\*]
- 14 bahu-śrutah ś[i]la-viśuddha-chetā [lokasya mokshāya kri]<sup>7</sup>t-ādhikārah || [16 \*\*] Na samsār-  
āpannam śubham-api - - <sup>8</sup>n=chichhubha-karam vipāko divyo
- 15 ----- cha niyamāḥ [\*\*] - - lok-ārtthāya prasṛita-manasām puṇya-mahatām vipāko - <sup>9</sup>rāṇām  
bhavati sukha- -
- 16 na jagatām || [17 \*\*] ----- n= <sup>10</sup>āṇḍaja-vyā[hrii(hṛi)]te golāngūla-nināda-pūrita-dare  
prāgbhāra-vi - - [\*\*] -----
- 17 yogīśvar-ādhyāsite veśm-edam jana - - janakam bhūtyai pratishṭhāpitam || [18 \*\*] Pūrvv-āpi  
ch=eyam ten-aiva dṛii(dṛi)-bddh-āchāryyena(na) Saugatī [\*\*] loke chiram -----  
[|| 19 \*\*]

### TRANSLATION

Luck!

(Verse 1) Victorious is Muni<sup>11</sup> who applied his mind to people's welfare (*and*) strove for it, who accomplished . . . happiness . . . , who had realized the ultimate reality, who possessed (*all*) the three-

<sup>1</sup> This *anusvāra* is superfluous.

<sup>2</sup> Better read *mātarām* *pitaram* *tathā*. The wrong usage *mātā-pitaram* occurs also in certain donative records, as in No. 2 below, *infra* p. 119, n. 2.

<sup>3</sup> Read <sup>°</sup>layah. The engraver first engraved *ya* after *tā*, and then soon discovered his omission of *la*. Consequently, what we see is his attempt at making *la* of the *ya*, followed by an imperfectly formed *ya* with an *anusvāra* over it.

<sup>4</sup> The letter *bha* had a mark attached to its right limb, which is erased. Also it has a superfluous *anusvāra* over it.

<sup>5</sup> The intended reading seems to be *vrāta*. Bhagwanlal Indraji read *dhyāta*. James Burgess read *vyāta* and corrected it into *vyāpta* or *vyātta*.

<sup>6</sup> In *samabuddhya* we obviously have a diaeretic form of *sambuddhya*, as *upapanna* is a diaeretic form of *utpanna* (through Pāli *uppanna*), occurring in this very verse. Such forms betray Pāli influence.

<sup>7</sup> The reading within the square brackets is as given by Bhagwanlal Indraji and James Burgess. This is, however, not certain. The letter *lo*, for instance, shows an upright

stroke on the top, which makes it look more like *lau* than *lo*. The following letter again looks more like *kā* than *ka*. The letter *syā* also has an additional stroke on the top. What is read as *mo* looks different from *mo* in *moksha* in line 7 above. The syllable *kshā* is not clear, but can be made out. The next letter looks more like *yā* or *yo* than simple *ya*. Finally, *kri* has a medial *i* stroke attached to its top, or it has to be read as *kri* and corrected into *kṛi*.

<sup>8</sup> Bhagwanlal Indraji and James Burgess read these two letters as *tu ki*, but on the original they look different.

<sup>9</sup> Bhagwanlal Indraji and James Burgess read this letter as *dhī*; the latter inadvertently omits the preceding *vipāko*.

<sup>10</sup> These four letters are read as *valabhir-nnā* by Bhagwanlal Indraji and James Burgess.

<sup>11</sup> *Muni* here stands for the Lord Buddha. *Muni*, *Śākyamuni*, *Munindra*, and the like, are some of the Buddha's appellations recorded even in Sanskrit lexicons. See, for instance, *Amarakosha*, i. 14: *Munindraḥ Śrīghanah Śāstā Muniḥ Śākyamunis-tu yah*. It may be pointed out that the author of the inscription in Cave XVII at Ajanṭā employs

## CAVE XXVI

fold<sup>1</sup> magnificent virtues, who knew no fear, (*and*) whose compassion beamed forth as the very moon-light—

(V. 2) —again, who had won complete victory over death and the like, who had attained to the state where one neither decays nor dies; and who, even after having entered into *nirvāna*<sup>2</sup>—the state of utter calm and bliss, beyond fear and void of locality—, fulfils the desires of (*all the beings in all the three worlds!*)

(V. 3) —Obeisance and praise (*offered to him*) will never turn fruitless from him, (*they rather*) bring abundant (*and*) great reward from him, and (*even*) a single flower offered to whom yields the fruit known as paradise (*and even*) final emancipation.

(V. 4) Therefore it behoves the wise man, treading the noble path<sup>3</sup> in this world, to show extreme reverence to the Tathāgatas who are exalted through their reputed excellences (*and*) have kindly feelings for humanity—have their heart melting, as it were, with compassion.<sup>4</sup>

(V. 5) Gods, being (*time and again*) harassed by troubles, can hardly aspire after victory; (*let alone gods*,) even Śiva had to undergo a curse whereby he became a horrid-<sup>5</sup>eyed one; Kṛishṇa, too, though free of all bondage, fell a victim to death. Therefore the Sugatas, who are absolutely free from fear, excel (*over all*).

(V. 6) The venerable sage Achala, even though he had achieved all which he aspired to (*and had no further desire*), out of gratitude built a cave-dwelling for the Master,<sup>6</sup> which is proclaiming (*so to say*,) His teachings.

(V. 7) Why should not a monument<sup>7</sup> be raised by those possessing wealth, desirous of mundane happiness as also of liberation?—(*such a charity should indeed be performed*) far rather by Bodhisattvas ('those beings who aspire after pure knowledge') for the happiness of the world as also for (*their own*) final emancipation?<sup>8</sup>

(V. 8) A man continues to enjoy himself in paradise as long as his memory is green in the world. One

*Muni*, *Munirāja*, and *Munindra* in verses 1, 24, and 28 respectively; see Burgess, *Descriptive Notes*, pp. 73 and 75; *A.S.W.I.*, vol. iv, pp. 129 and 130; *Hyd. Arch. Ser.*, No. 15 (*Inscription in Cave XVII at Ajantā*, by V. V. Mirashi), *Hyderabad*, 1949, pp. 10, 12, and 13.

<sup>1</sup> These refer to *mānasika*, *vāchika*, and *kāyika* (mental, oral, and physical) qualities.

<sup>2</sup> This is what is obviously indicated by the epithets that follow.

<sup>3</sup> *Kṛita* here, in my opinion, is to be taken in the sense of *Kṛita-yuga*, the age of purity and nobleness of character. Compare: *Loko mad-yuga-janmā kṛita-Kṛita-karmā na mad-dharma* | *iti hetor-iva balinā Kalinā sampīḍyate sā-dhuh* || —“The fellow is born in my age, but has been doing the deeds of the *Kṛita* age and not following my ways”, reasoning thus, methinks, Kali (the modern age of discord) is specially harsh upon good people.’

<sup>4</sup> As pointed out by James Burgess, *drava-karunā-hṛidayeshu* is bad Sanskrit, yet its meaning is plain enough.

<sup>5</sup> I take the word *kāchara* as a variant of *kachchara*, meaning ‘wicked’, ‘ungainly’, &c.

<sup>6</sup> The original has *Śāstṛi*, ‘teacher’ or ‘master’, which is another well-known appellation of the Buddha. See above, p. 116, n. 11

<sup>7</sup> The word *kirti* in the present context means ‘temple’, ‘monument’, or the like. See an essay entitled ‘Kṛiti: Its Connotation’, in the *Siddha-Bhārati* (Dr. Siddheshwar Varma Presentation Volume), Hoshiarpur, 1950, Pt. I, pp. 38–42.

<sup>8</sup> This *āryā* is rather terse and may be elucidated further. In verse 6 we are informed that the venerable monk Achala caused a rock-temple to be excavated in honour of the Buddha, which evidently means that he provided the money needed for the work. This is a meritorious act which ordinarily a lay worshipper performs if he desires happiness in this world and liberation hereafter. Verse 7, the present *āryā*, justifies a monk’s performing such an act. Achala is here alluded to as a Bodhisattva. The expression *prāg eva* is an idiom peculiar to Buddhist Sanskrit literature and answers to English ‘far rather’. The implication of the statement in the verse seems to be this, that it is far more desirable that monks possessing wealth should spend it for charitable purposes than even that worldly wealthy people should do so. The adjuncts *bhava-sukha-kāma* and *moksha-kāma* are common to Bodhisattvas and *saṁvidyamāna-vibhavas* (‘wealthy people’), but these are to be interpreted slightly differently in each case, as has been done in the translation.

## APPENDIX

should (*therefore*) set up a memorial on the mountains that will endure for as long as the moon and the sun continue.<sup>1</sup>

(Vv. 9–13) The monk Buddhabhadra has caused (*this*) temple of Sugata to be made in honour of his parents as well as in honour of (*that*) Bhavvirāja who served the mighty king of Aśmaka as the latter's minister, who was attached to him (*the monk*) in friendship through many successive births, who was steadfast, grateful, wise, learned, expert in the polity both of Brīhaspati and of Śukra,<sup>2</sup> proficient in social laws and customs, worshipping only the Buddha, supplying the needs of all the needy; who was very eloquent, was exalted through his virtues, was all humility, was renowned the world over for his pious character, was blessed with a son, an equally foremost personality, Devarāja (*by name*), who accomplishes, with tact and sweetness only, even such tasks as would normally call for rigours and active struggle, who is (*now*) the excellent minister of the king (*of Aśmaka*),<sup>3</sup> and who, on the demise of his father, raised the (*dignity of his*) office by his excellences.

(V. 14) Thanks to<sup>4</sup> the monk Dharmadatta as well as to (*my*) good pupil Bhadrabandhu; for it is these two who have seen to the excavation and completion of this (*cave*) temple on my behalf.<sup>5</sup>

(V. 15) Whatever merit is here, may that be for the attainment of fruit (*in the shape*) of supreme knowledge as well as the multitude of all the pure qualities by them<sup>6</sup> and by (*all the beings in all the three*) worlds!

(V. 16) He who, born of a noble family, endowed with great learning, with his mind purified by righteous conduct, (*competent to lead the people on the path of liberation*), having perfectly mastered the course of the Buddha's teachings, became a monk in his early age.

(V. 17) [Owing to the serious lacunae in the text as a result of the damage done to the inscribed portion here, a coherent translation of the extant part is not possible.]

(V. 18) This (*cave*) temple has been established for the welfare of ---, on the top of a mountain, which is frequented by great yogins, and the valleys of which are resonant with the chirpings of birds and the chattering of monkeys, ---

(V. 19) And this *praśasti*<sup>7</sup> of Sugata has likewise been composed by the same teacher --- for long in the world.

No. 2. This inscription is engraved on the pedestal of the topmost Buddha figure, standing, facing north, on the left side of the façade. It consists of two lines, the second of which is much shorter. It has likewise been edited by Bhagwanlal Indraji and James Burgess.<sup>8</sup> Its facsimile has not been published previously.

<sup>1</sup> The significance of the word *kirti* is further made clear here. By advising his readers to make temples out of the living rock, the author obviously alludes to the lasting nature of such monuments in contrast to those made of brick and mortar, which are less durable.

<sup>2</sup> The reference is obviously to the *nītis*, schools of polity of Brīhaspati and Śukra, the former the preceptor of the gods and the latter the teacher of the demons.

<sup>3</sup> Both Bhagwanlal Indraji and James Burgess wrongly took this part of Devarāja's description as applying to his father, Bhavvirāja.

<sup>4</sup> *Āgamya*, literally 'having come', is another idiomatic expression peculiar to Buddhist Sanskrit. It is used to acknowledge indebtedness. Cf. *yā kāchid asmākam śrī-saubhāgya-sāmpat sarvāśau Buddham Bhagavantam āga-*

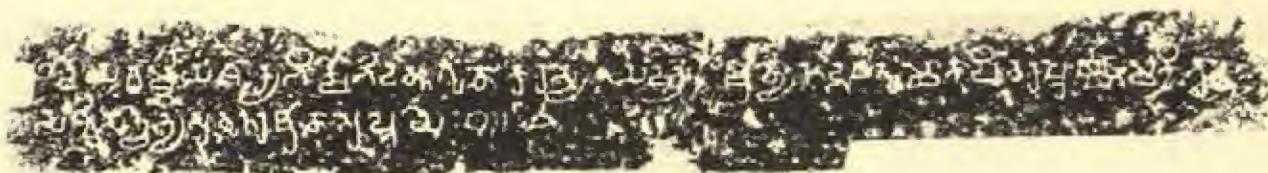
*mya*—'whatever fortune of wealth and prosperity we possess, all that we owe to the Lord Buddha!' (*Divyāvadāna*, edited by E. B. Cowell and R. A. Neil, Cambridge, 1886, p. 95.)

<sup>5</sup> This statement, in the first person, is supposed to be emanating from the monk Buddhabhadra, to whom the excavation of the cave-temple is due.

<sup>6</sup> That is, the persons named, Bhavvirāja, Buddhabhadra, his parents, Dharmadatta, and Bhadrabandhu, who are concerned with the excavation of the hall and the fane within.

<sup>7</sup> The original *pūrvā* is a substantive and it means *praśasti*, 'eulogy'.

<sup>8</sup> Burgess, *Descriptive Notes*, p. 79, No. 7; *A.S.W.I.*, vol. iv, p. 136, No. 7.



The inscription is comparatively well preserved. A little blank space between *yad-atra* and *punyaṁ* in line 1 is owing to a flaw in the stone itself. Palaeographically the two forms of *t*, one with its semicircle to the right of the vertical and the other with it to its left, are noteworthy, as in *bhadanta* and *yad-atra*, line 1.

## TEXT

1 Siddham<sup>1</sup> deyadharma-yam Śākyā-bhikshor-bhadanta-Guṇākarasya yad-atra punyaṁ tad-bhavatu mātā-pitaram<sup>2</sup> pūrvvāṅgamām kṛi(kṛi)tvā

2 sarvva-satvebhya<sup>3</sup> anutara-jñāna āptaye<sup>4</sup>

## TRANSLATION

Luck! This is the meritorious gift of the Śākyā monk, the reverend Guṇākara. Whatever merit is here, may that be for the attainment of the supreme knowledge to all the sentient beings, beginning with the (*donor's*) father and mother!

No. 3. This inscription is engraved on the pedestal of the topmost Buddha figure, standing, facing south, on the right side of the façade. It is fragmentary, a large portion of it, on the right side, having been broken away. The extant portion has the beginnings of the three lines—the inscription evidently consisted of three lines only. It has been previously edited by Bhagwanlal Indraji and James Burgess.<sup>5</sup> It is a donative record like the foregoing one.



<sup>1</sup> Expressed by a symbol.

<sup>4</sup> A few auspicious symbols that follow mark the end of the record.

<sup>2</sup> Read *mātā-pitarau pūrvvāṅgamau*. Curiously enough the same wrong form *mātā-pitaram* occurs in verse 13 of the foregoing inscription (No. 1), too.

<sup>5</sup> Burgess, *Descriptive Notes*, p. 80, No. 8; *A.S.W.I.*, vol. iv, p. 136, No. 8, Plate LVIII, No. 8

<sup>3</sup> Read *sattvebhyaonuttara-jñān-āptaye*.

## APPENDIX

### TEXT

- 1 Siddham<sup>1</sup> deyadharma<sub>mō</sub>[yam]<sup>2</sup> -----
- 2 ya<sup>3</sup>d<sub>a</sub>tra pu<sup>4</sup>[nyam] -----
- 3 sarvva-satvā(ttvā)nā[m<sub>a</sub>]<sup>5</sup> -----

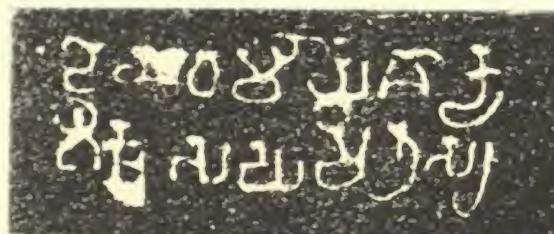
### TRANSLATION

Luck! [This] is the meritorious gift - - - Whatever merit is here [*let that be for the attainment of supreme knowledge*] by all sentient beings - - -

No. 4. This brief record of two short lines is engraved on the pedestal of a small figure of the Buddha to the left of the third niche from the front, in the right aisle. It has also been published by Bhagwanlal Indraji and James Burgess.<sup>6</sup> A comparison of the facsimile reproduced here with that published in the *A.S.W.I.*, vol. iv, Plate LVIII, No. 9, will show that the latter had been worked up by hand considerably before it was reproduced.



Inscription in present condition



Facsimile published in *A.S.W.I.* vol. iv

### TEXT

- 1 Deyadharma<sub>mō</sub>yam Śākyā-
- 2 bhikshu-Saṅgha<sup>7</sup>mitrasya

### TRANSLATION

This is the meritorious gift of the Śākyā monk, Saṅghamitra.

<sup>1</sup> Expressed by a symbol.

<sup>2</sup> A very small part of the left side of the letter *ya* of *yam* is all that survives.

<sup>3</sup> What looks like an *anusvāra* over *ya* is a natural depression in the stone.

<sup>4</sup> The gap between *pu* and what follows is caused by the subscript *m* of the syllable *rm̄mo* in line 1 above. What

follows *pu* is obviously *nyam* of which only a part of the subscript *ya* now remains.

<sup>5</sup> Only the left side of the letter *ma* is now to be seen.

<sup>6</sup> Burgess, *Descriptive Notes*, p. 80, No. 9; *A.S.W.I.*, vol. iv, p. 136, Plate LVIII, No. 9.

<sup>7</sup> What looks like an *anusvāra* over *gha* is obviously a natural depression in the stone.

## CAVES XXVI-XXVII

## CAVES XXVI-XXVII

As stated above, the back wall of the Chapel between Caves XXVI and XXVII contains a fairly large inscription. It was covered with the mass of debris accumulating there through landslides caused by rains at different periods, and moisture and salts have much damaged the rock on which it is carved. In 1936, when the court of Cave XXVI was excavated and the chapel to its left was cleared of wreckage, this inscription was exposed to view.

The inscribed part measures about  $2\frac{1}{2}$  feet by  $5\frac{1}{2}$  feet. The inscription consists of fourteen lines in all. It is taken as being in three parts, indicated here as *A*, *B*, and *C* (Facsimiles II-V). Of these *A* and *C* each consists of only one line. *A* occurs right above *B* and possibly announces the fact that below is given the description of so-and-so. *C* occurs almost in a line with *A*, but at a distance. It states that 'this has been written by Kapaṭatuṅga'. *B* thus constitutes the inscription proper. It consists of 12 lines of varying lengths. At the end of several of these lines some inscribed portions have been destroyed, the exact extent of which cannot now be determined.

The task of deciphering the inscription is beset with various difficulties. First of all its damaged condition is a great handicap. The natural fissures of the rock have here and there got mixed up with the strokes and dots of the engraved letters, which, in their turn, have mostly suffered from exposure to the ravages of the weather. Then there is the peculiarity of the script. Several signs have similar forms, making it difficult to distinguish one from the other. To crown all, there is the language-difficulty. Were it pure Sanskrit, the extant part of the inscription could have been correctly deciphered in spite of the other handicaps. The language of the inscription happens to be a queer mixture of Sanskrit and Prākrit. There are instances where one compound word is half Sanskrit and half Prākrit. In line 5, for example, we have *rājādhi-arayara*, for Sanskrit *rājādhirāja*. The complete expression may have been *mahārājādhirāja*. Even where the writer has used pure Sanskrit words he has still been strongly under the influence of Prākrit, especially in the matter of orthography. We have thus such strange forms as *pathe* for *pathē*, *bhrāttā* for *bhrātā* in line 2, *Vajraṭṭa* for *Vajrāṭa* in line 3, and so on. The worst difficulty is when an initial consonant is duplicated, as in *Lalitāvaloka*, in lines 3-4. The word beginning thus with a double *l* in line 12 has not been completely deciphered. Short and long vowels are also used promiscuously, as illustrated by *Kapaṭtatūṅgena* in line 14, where *t* is again unnecessarily duplicated, the correct form being *Kapaṭtatūṅgena*.

As already indicated, palaeographic evidence would place the record in the eighth or the ninth century A.D. The characters belong to the nail-headed variety, the top of each letter, as a rule, having a triangle with its apex downwards. Earlier instances of this script occur in such records as the Poona plates of the Vākāṭaka queen Prabhāvatīguptā.<sup>1</sup>

As regards the contents of the inscription, its object is not clear. It, however, belongs to the Rāshṭrakūṭas, probably of the Vidarbha line. In line 2 it refers to one Nanarāja born of the

<sup>1</sup> *Epigraphia Indica*, vol. xv, pp. 39 ff., and plate. For additional examples of the same script, on stone and copper-

plate inscriptions, early and late, see *ibid.*, vol. xxvii, p. 132 and note 4.

## APPENDIX

Rāshṭrakūṭa family 'in Dakṣiṇāpatha', i.e. in South India. The name is probably to be taken as Nannarāja. We know of two members of the Vidarbha branch of the Rāshṭrakūṭa family who bore the name Nannarāja: one who issued the Nagardhan plates,<sup>1</sup> and who was evidently a younger brother of Svāmirāja, the progenitor of the said lineage (A.D. 570-90), and the other who issued the Multāi plates,<sup>2</sup> and who was a son of Svāmikarāja (A.D. 690-710) of the same lineage.<sup>3</sup> The Nanarāja of our record is probably identical with one or other of these two Nannarājas. Our record next mentions Nanarāja's brother, whose name seems to have been lost in the damaged portion of line 2. In line 3, it names one Vajraṭṭadeva, who, as the inscription has it, was 'famed in (all) the three worlds'. It is quite possible that this is in fact the name of Nanarāja's brother, though this relationship is not known from any other source. One Vajraṭṭa, on the other hand, figures very prominently among the enemies defeated by the Chālukyas of Bādāmi, who, in their turn, were defeated by Dantidurga, a member of the Mūlaka branch of the Rāshṭrakūṭa family (A.D. 710-50).<sup>4</sup> This Vajraṭṭa is mentioned under the variant Vajjaḍa in the Nasik plates of Dharāśraya-Jayasiṁha, a son of Chālukya Pulakeśin II. The form occurring in our inscription is *Vajraṭṭa*, which, but for the unnecessary duplication of *t* in it, is the same as *Vajraṭṭa*. Besides, in all likelihood, one and the same ruler is meant by *Vajraṭṭa*, *Vajraṭṭa*, and *Vajjaḍa*. Scholars have been at pains to fix the identity of this mysterious figure. Dr. N. Venkataramanayya equated him with Vajrāyudha, a ruler of Kanauj in North India,<sup>5</sup> while Professor V. V. Mirashi identifies him with Śilāditya III of the Maitraka dynasty, an emperor of the West.<sup>6</sup> Our inscription, on the other hand, would tend to prove him to be a Rāshṭrakūṭa monarch. The situation may have to be understood as follows: Vajraṭṭa of the Vidarbha branch of the Rāshṭrakūṭa family suffered a defeat at the hands of a Chālukya king of Bādāmi (Dharāśraya-Jayasiṁha by name, according to his Nasik plates), while, later on, Dantidurga of the Mūlaka branch of the Rāshṭrakūṭa family likewise inflicted a crushing defeat on a Chālukya monarch. It would look as if the defeat of one branch was avenged by the other.

Further, our inscription mentions one Lalitāvaloka immediately after Vajraṭṭadeva. Their relation is, however, not clear. Dr. A. S. Altekar says: 'The *avaloka*-ending epithets were peculiarly associated with the Rāshṭrakūṭas.' He illustrates the point by citing several instances: Nāgāvaloka, Khaḍgāvaloka, Vikramāvaloka, Mānāvaloka, Raṇāvaloka, Guṇāvaloka, and Dharmāvaloka.<sup>7</sup> To this list may be added Lalitāvaloka of our inscription. Can this be an epithet of Vajraṭṭadeva himself?

What follows in lines 4-9 seems to be a description of this Vajraṭṭadeva-Lalitāvaloka as a warrior comparable to Nārāyaṇa and Chaturbhuj (both of them being names of the god Vishṇu) in the battlefield.

In line 5 we have a *Mallayeta* and in line 8 a *Cholla*. It is rather hazardous to suggest at

<sup>1</sup> *Ep. Ind.*, vol. xxviii, pp. 1 ff. and plate.

<sup>2</sup> *Indian Antiquary*, vol. xviii, pp. 230 ff.

<sup>3</sup> *Ep. Ind.*, vol. xxviii, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> *Indian Historical Quarterly*, vol. xx, pp. 181 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 353 ff. In the same journal, pp. 360 ff., Miss Krishnakumari J. Virji throws some further light on the problem.

<sup>7</sup> A. S. Altekar, *The Rāshṭrakūṭas and their Times*, Poona, 1934, p. 83.

CAVES XXVI-XXVII

• this stage that they refer respectively to a *Malayesa*, 'king of Malaya' and a *Chola* ruler. Similarly we cannot at present state definitely what *puṇḍra* in lines 1 and 10 stands for. It may be a proper name, presumably of a country. We know of a *Puṇḍravardhana* in East India, but not in South India. Certain recensions of the *Mahābhārata* bracket the name of the ruler of the *Puṇḍra* kingdom with that of the *Pāṇḍya* in enumerating the princes who attended the *svayamvara* of Draupadī.<sup>1</sup> Since, however, all the other princes mentioned in that particular verse, except the *Pāṇḍya* one, belong either to the north or to the east, it is doubtful whether the *Puṇḍra* refers to a country in South India.

A name *Chāchupattha* has been read in line 12. The suffix *pattha* for *patha*, as in *Dakshinā-patthe* in line 2, suggests that this also is the name of a region. The reading is, however, not beyond all doubt. Nor can I hazard an identification of it, even if the reading be correct.

Owing to the imperfect nature of the transcript offered here, it is not possible to add a coherent translation of the text. In the absence of such a translation, the foregoing remarks and comments may prove of some help in advancing the study of this highly important record.

The text given below has been prepared by me from the inked estampages taken in 1942, under the supervision of Dr. N. P. Chakravarti, the then Government Epigraphist for India, as also from those prepared in 1950 under my personal supervision. On this occasion I examined the original also, but found that the inscription could be read far better from estampages. I must say that I have been deciphering inscriptions for the past eighteen years now and that during all this period I have not come across such a hard nut to crack as the present one. I have spent months on it, and was occasionally also assisted by Messrs. M. Venkataramayya, M.A., M.Litt., and P. B. Desai, M.A., two of the Epigraphical Assistants in my office, in the task of deciphering it. It is a great satisfaction to me that the inscription has yielded quite a considerable part of its secrets to the combined efforts of all three of us. We hope to continue our efforts until all that can be gleaned from this inscription has been gleaned. The text given here may thus be regarded as tentative.

TEXT

A

1 da hi ni .ā rāya-rāṭhṭe puṇḍra sa ya la pa [ri] iva sām - ti

B

2 śri[h]<sup>2</sup> Dakshinā-patthe Rāshtrakūṭṭa-kule s[ūto] Na<sup>3</sup>narājasya bhrāttā [du]hi[ka] - - Ilā-  
chandrasya [ka] - - - -<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the *Mahābhārata*, *Ādiparvan*, critical edition by

Vishnu S. Sukthankar, Poona, 1933, p. 724, note to verse

• 15: *Kaliṅga-Vāṅg-Ādhipa-Pāṇḍya-Paṇḍrā Videharājā*

• Elsewhere the *Puṇḍras* are 'men-  
tioned along with the Āndhras', who no doubt belonged  
to South India. See the *Journal of the Bihar Research  
Society*, vol. xxxvii, 1951, p. 127.

<sup>2</sup> The lower dot of the *visarjanīya* is clear. The upper

dot has partly disappeared.

<sup>3</sup> There is space enough for one letter between the two *na's*, and there seems to be some abrasion there. However, I take it to be a flaw in the stone, which the engraver possibly avoided. Presumably he gives here the name *Nannarājā*.

<sup>4</sup> Traces of some few *aksharas* after the doubtful *ka* are visible, of which a subscript *chha*, in a comparatively small size, is clear enough.

## APPENDIX

- 3 [n]ī asya <sup>1</sup>Nāmnā Vajraṭṭadev-eti vikhyāto bhuvana-ttraye [|\*] tasyeyam āmka-pa - - [rā] ||  
Llalitā-
- 4 valoka-śatru-prākāra-pralaya-divākara-ni[ddhā]da .ā[nu]rāga-prachaṇḍa-vidyādhara-chaṇḍa-Nā-  
rāyana-rip[ū].e -
- 5 matta-gaja-kesari-mahimāṇam Mallayeśa-kārttā[nta] - - [sra] - - - [rājā]dhi ara[yara] - samara-  
stambha-.u. i - - -
- 6 [ya]da[mrī]a [śaurya]-saṁgrāma-gaja-paridrava[na]-davagi āhava-haṇua | samara-Chaturbhujā ||  
taṇḍa -[i]
- 7 taṇu atula - - gaja-la . i n.ū [sa]chhaheṇa chaṇḍ-āṇila-vea-chali<sup>2</sup>a-chāru-la -<sup>3</sup> yara
- 8 chaṁchaleṇa Cholla iṇṇiarāya-raṭṭu-jīem āyāsa ma ṇa ja i - bha i ja saṇṇi-bhāṇu - ṇṇa
- 9 vihartum kīmṇareṇa || ko ajar-āma[ra] e<sup>4</sup> thu jage i mū jā ṇamta vidiṇa - ḥḍabham | chām ti -  
[saṁ ti] -[ṇṇa]ya
- 10 kāpara[rṇṇa] - raṇṇihī -[ja]hi puṇḍra-jīvia kuhaṇḍa - tī esha saṇṇi-bhāṇ[ū]lla bha i sura-jua - -  
ṇṇava[bhuja]
- 11 riva[kha]-bhamge maṇḍavo iṇṇi arāya-[ra]ṭṭurṇṇi[tu]- vihimillā[bhu]-jaṇa sa ya la sa lāhe ḥi  
-ja[ta] - ma - -
- 12 [sa]para-grāha || lla - khaṇḍe[śva]ra viṇāu chāu[ra vartta]ṇa e Chāchupatthe durjaha - ḥe - - - -
- 13 - - bhima - ḥḍa-prāya - bham -[ga]sa ma the<sup>5</sup> maham guṇa e - dā si e .e ku[lla]ṇa - [sa]m ti -

## C

### 14 Kapaṭṭatūṇgena li[khi\*]tam-ētat

<sup>1</sup> From *nāmnā* to *ttraye* we have obviously a hemistich in the *Anushtubh* metre. Between *nā* and *mā* there is again a blank, apparently due to the roughness of the stone.

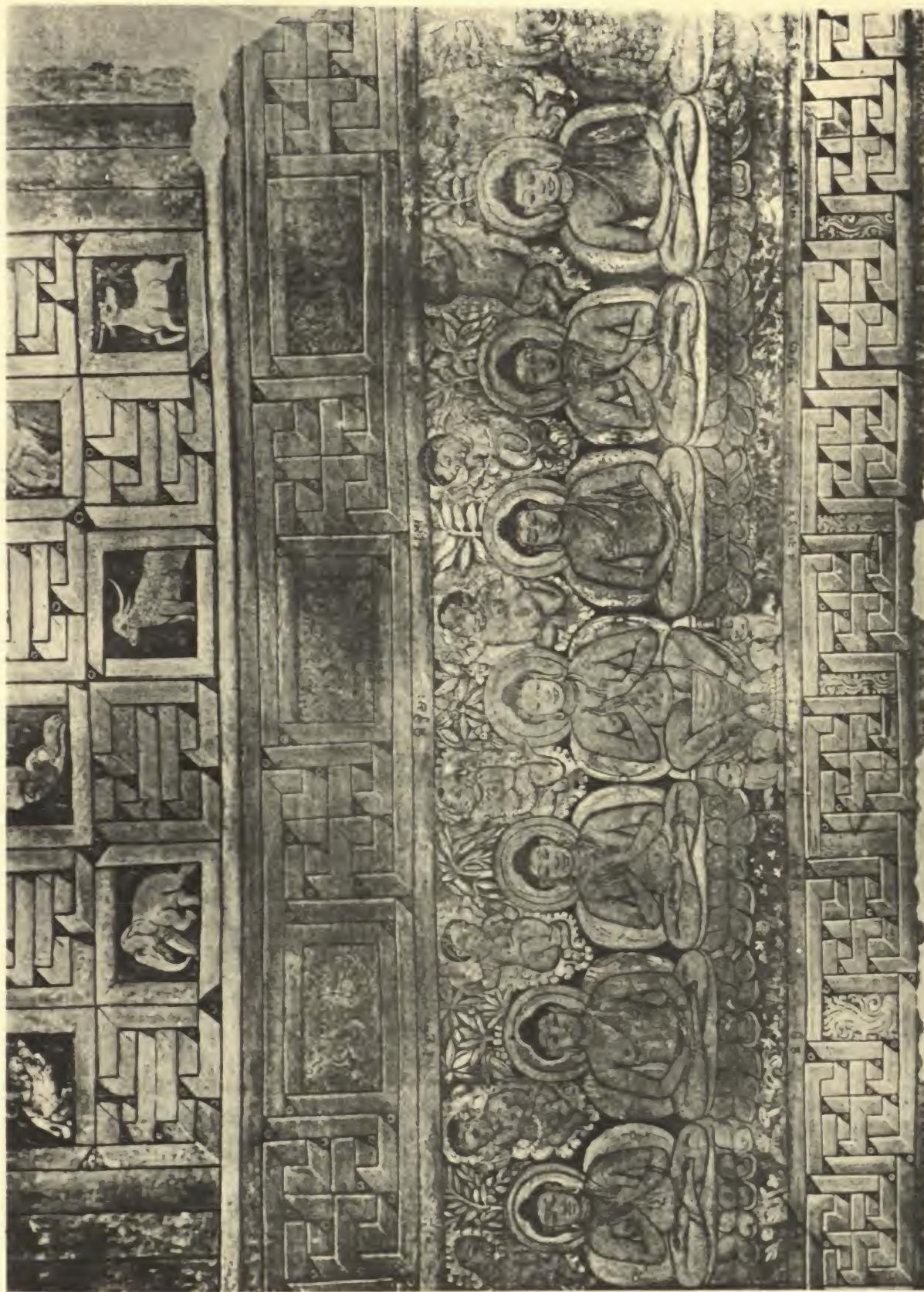
<sup>2</sup> Between *li* and *a* there is a little blank space which is due to the medial *u* of *r̥bhu* of *Chaturbhujā*, in the previous line, extending downwards.

<sup>3</sup> This may not have been a letter, but only a blank

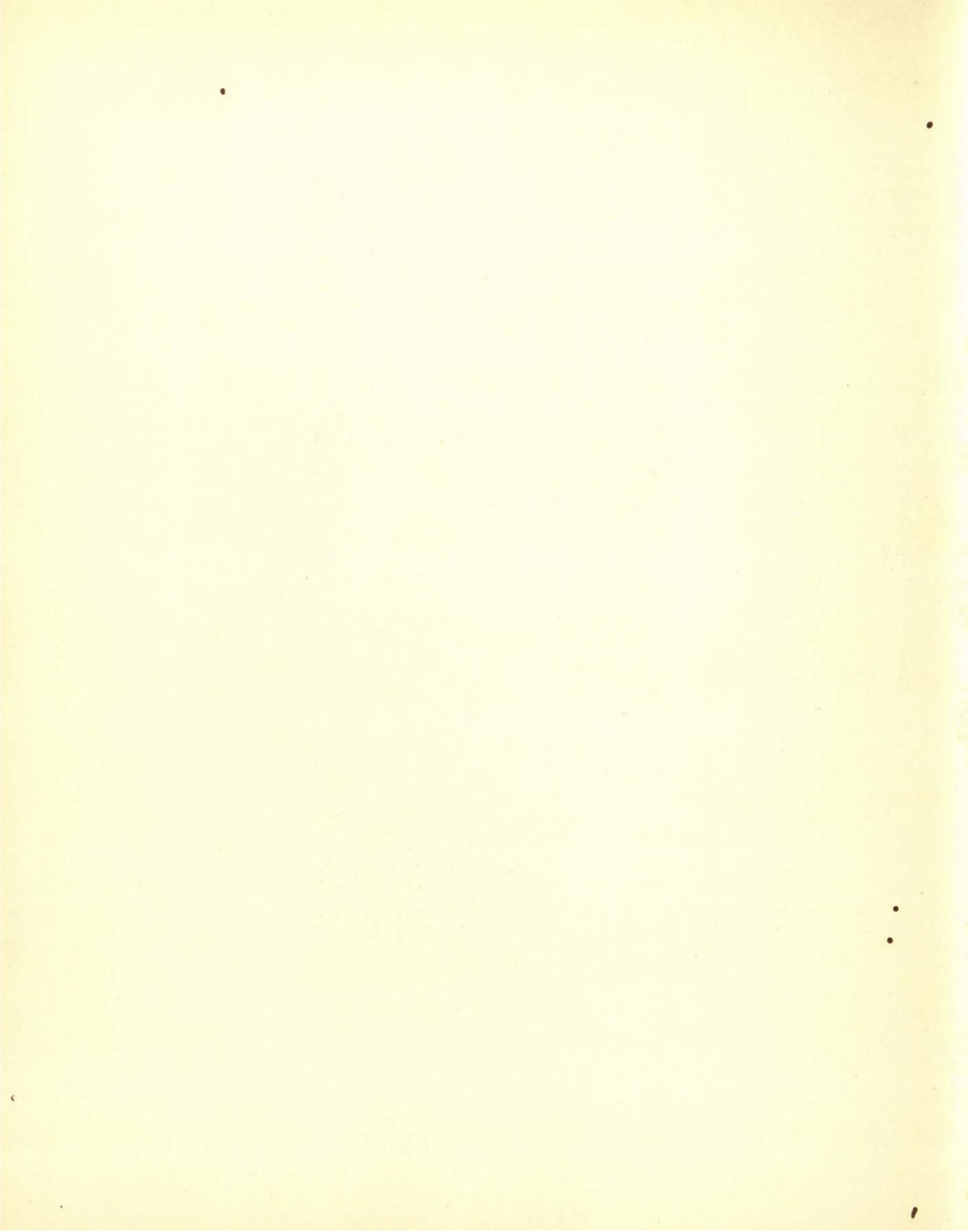
owing to the roughness of the stone.

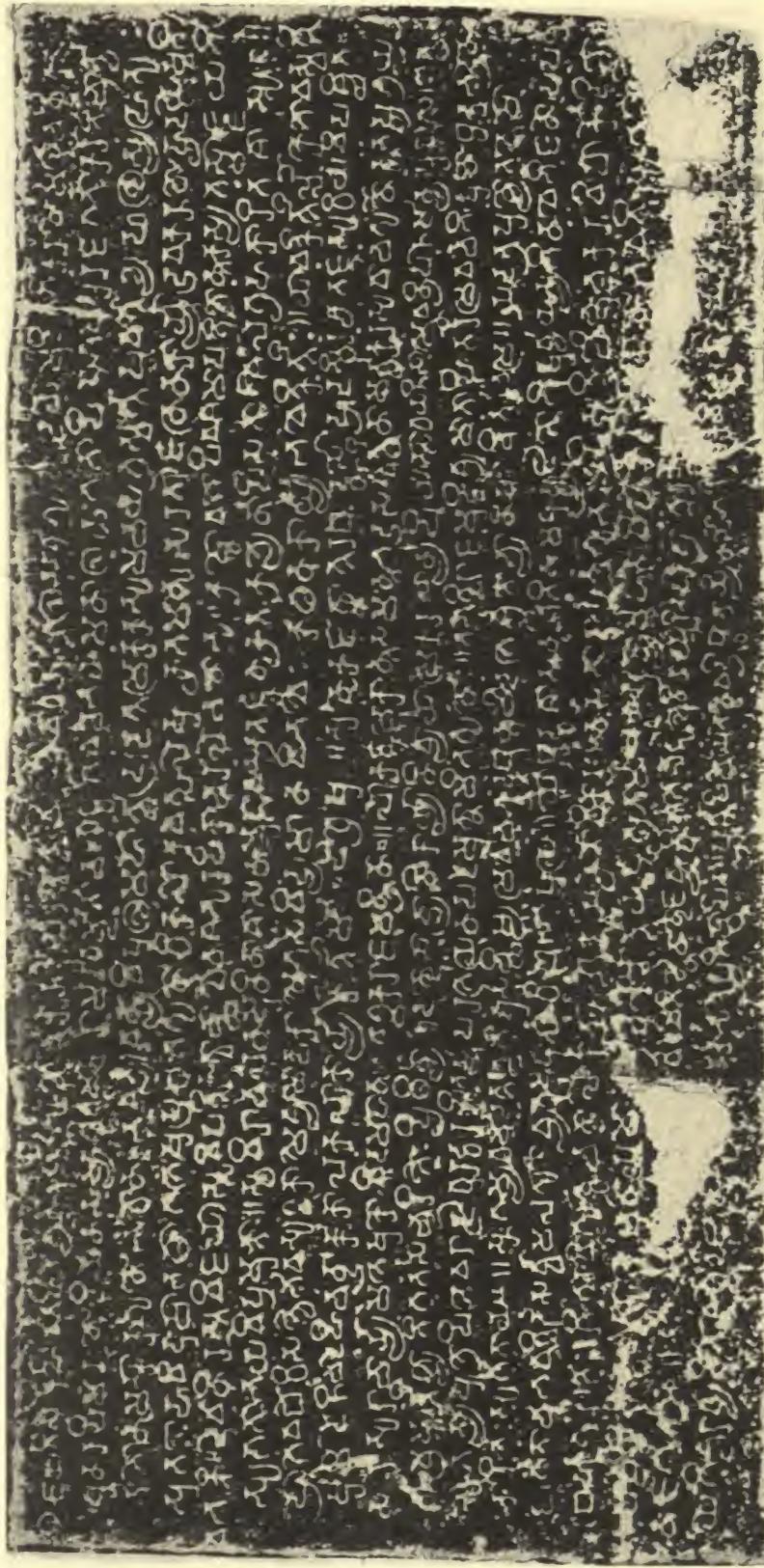
<sup>4</sup> Between *e* and *thu* there is a little blank space due to the medial *u* of *ṭṭu* of *raṭṭu*, in the foregoing line, extending downwards.

<sup>5</sup> The letter *the* appears above the line. Next to it are some vertical strokes which must be natural depressions in the stone.



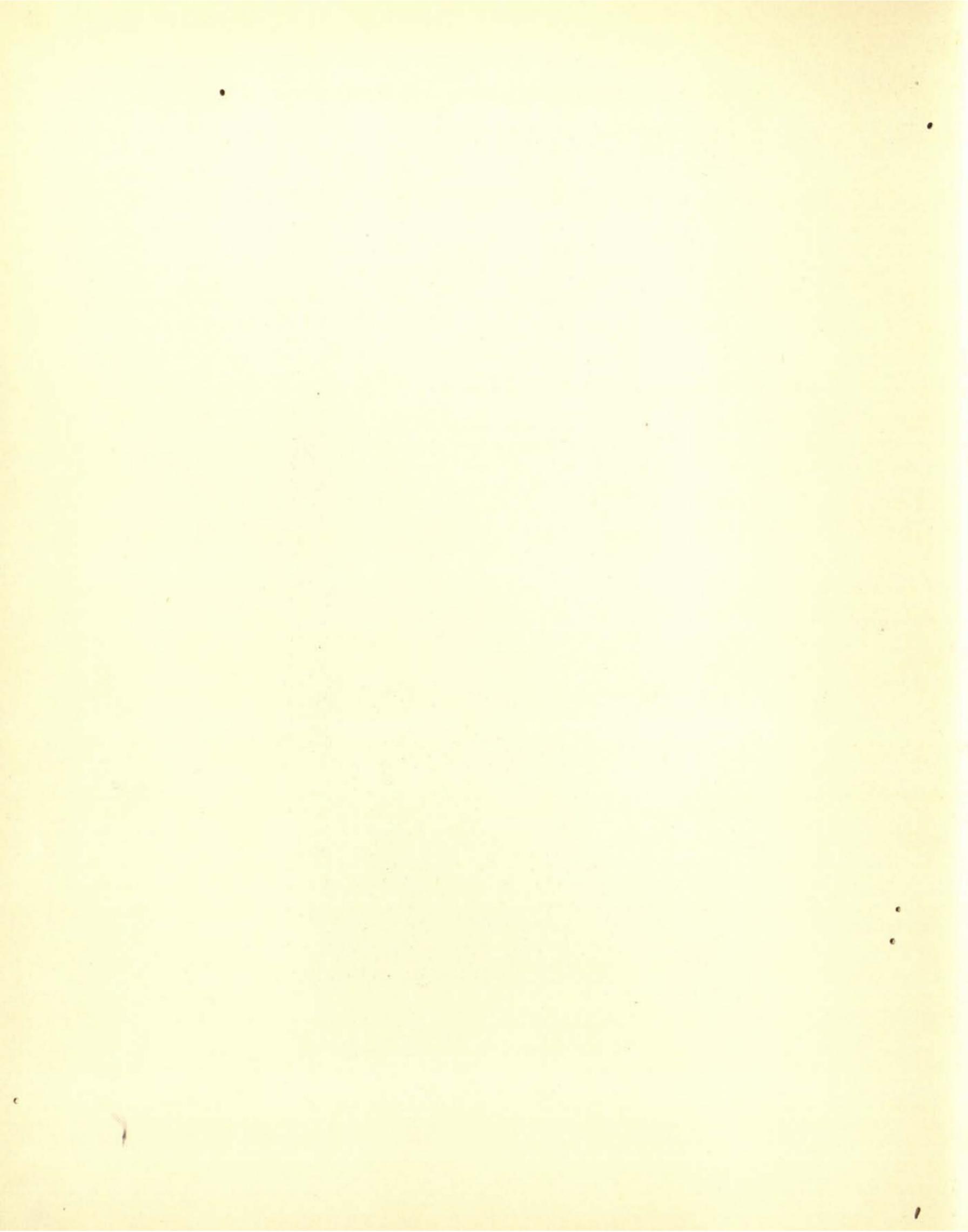
PAINTED INSCRIPTIONS IN CAVE XXII

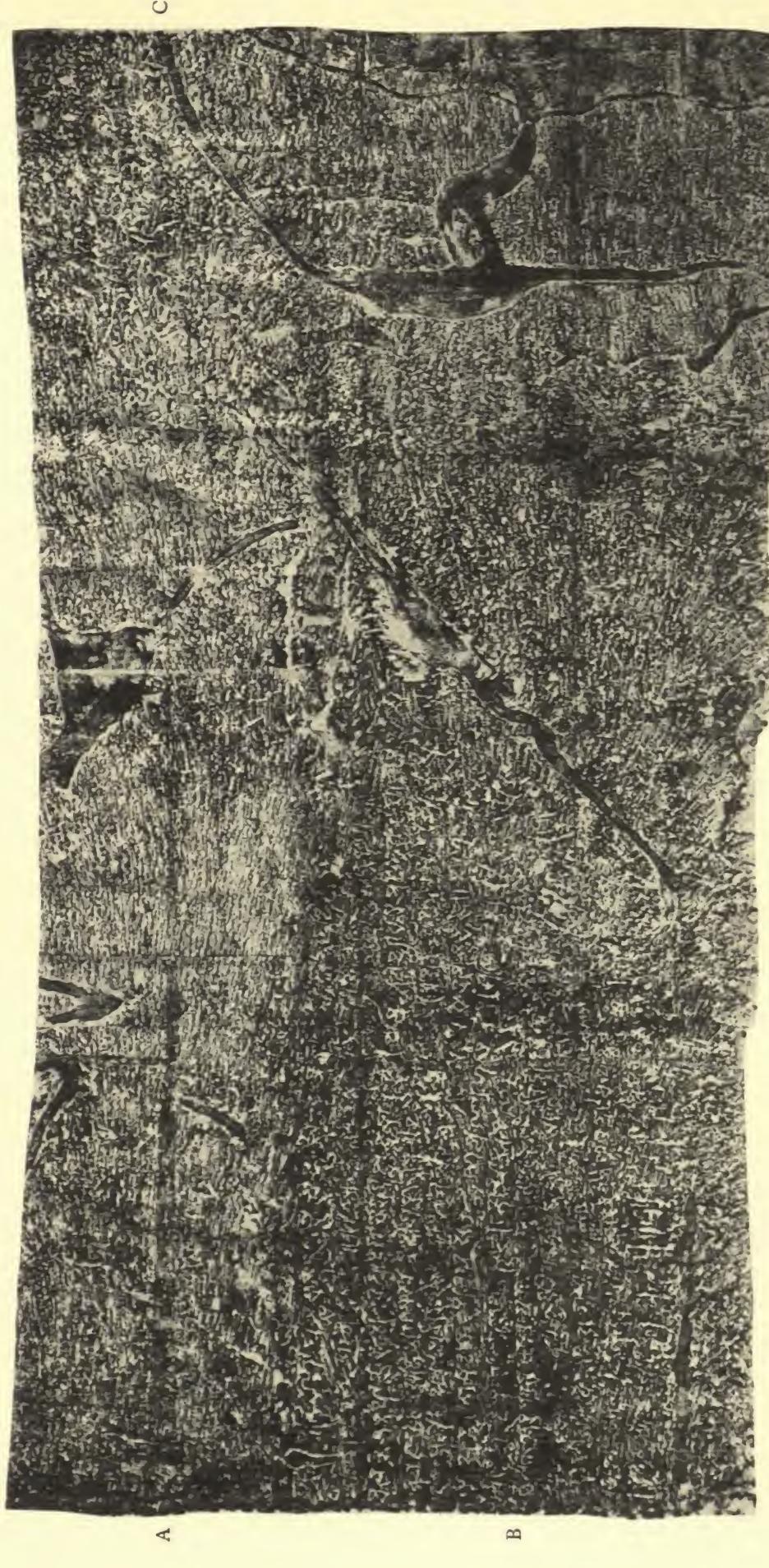




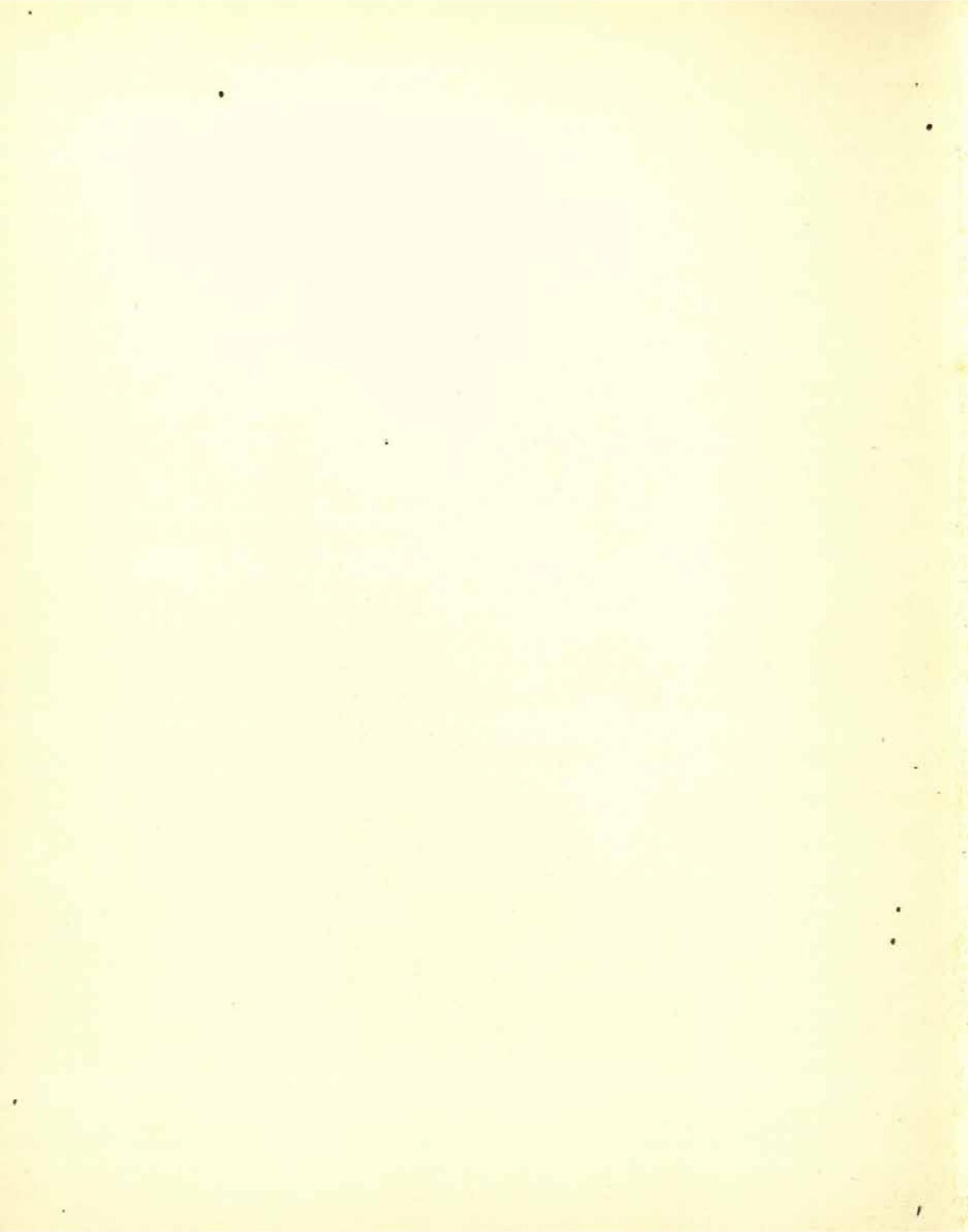
INSCRIPTION ON THE BACK WALL OF THE VERANDA, OVER THE DOORWAY ON THE RIGHT SIDE

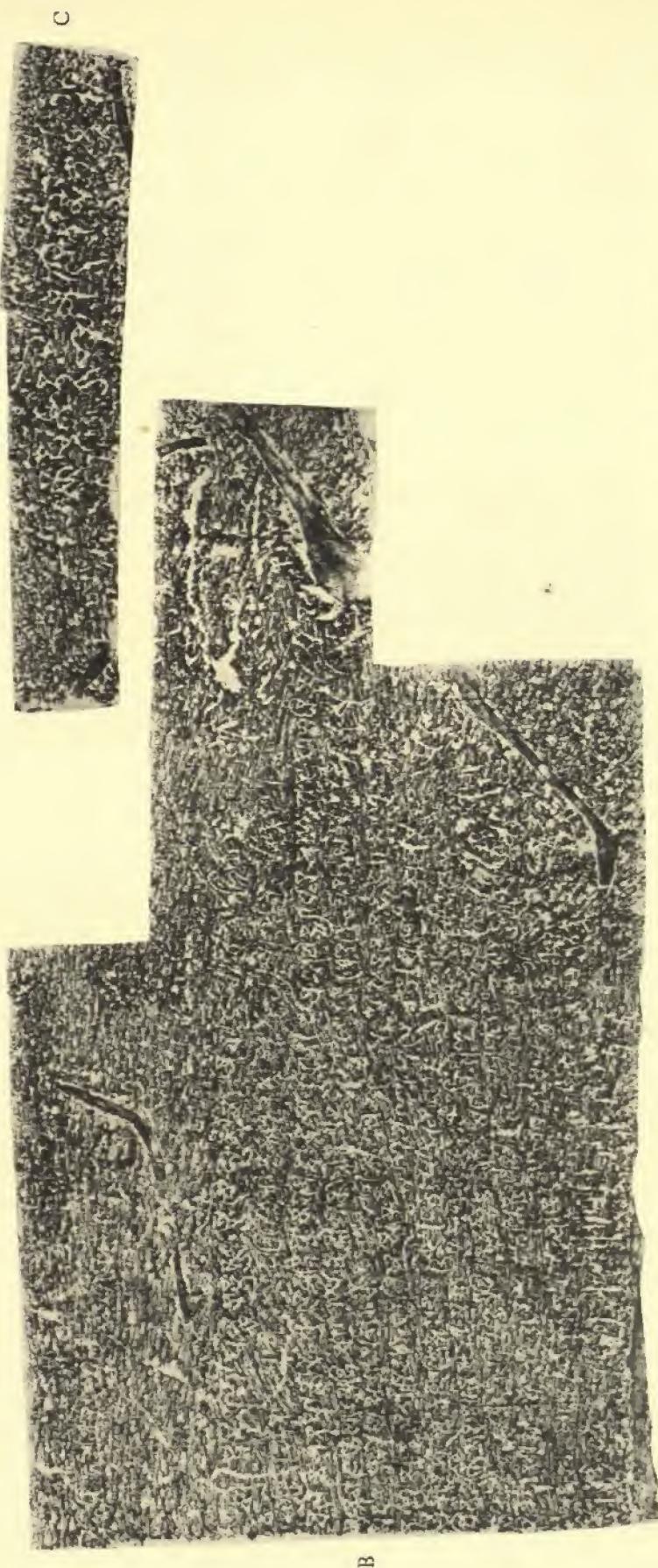
CAVE XXVI



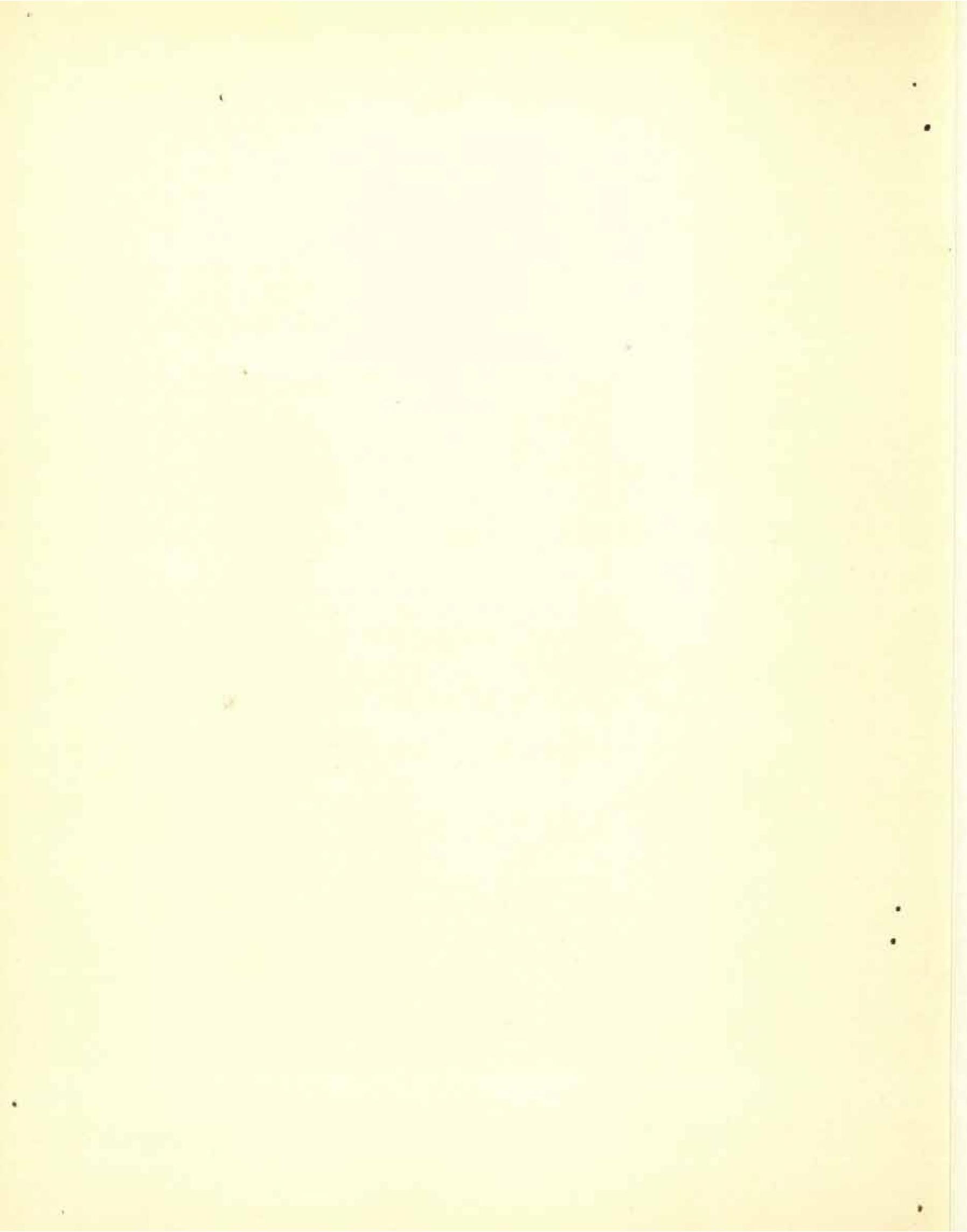


INSCRIPTION ON THE BACK WALL OF THE CHAPEL TO THE LEFT OF THE COURT  
CAVE XXVI





INSCRIPTION ON THE BACK WALL OF THE CHAPEL TO THE LEFT OF THE COURT  
CAVE XXVI  
PORTIONS B AND C

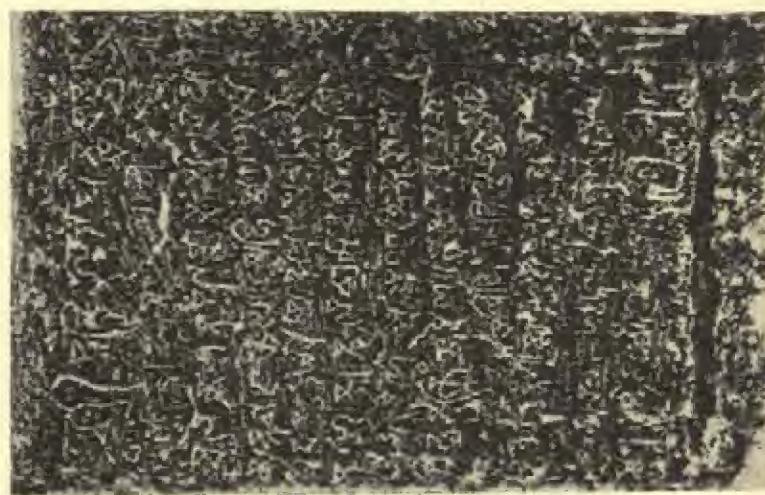




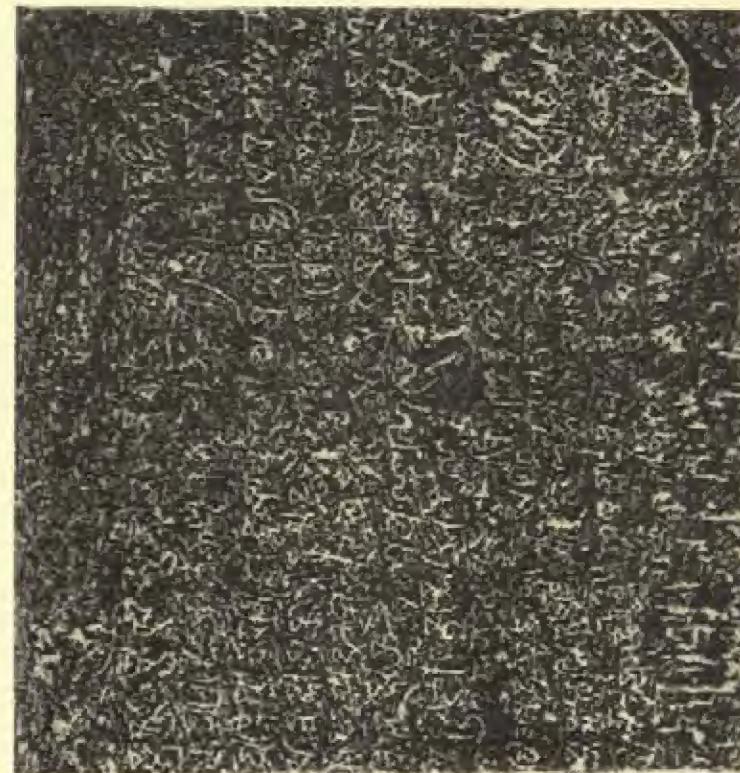
A



C



B (1)

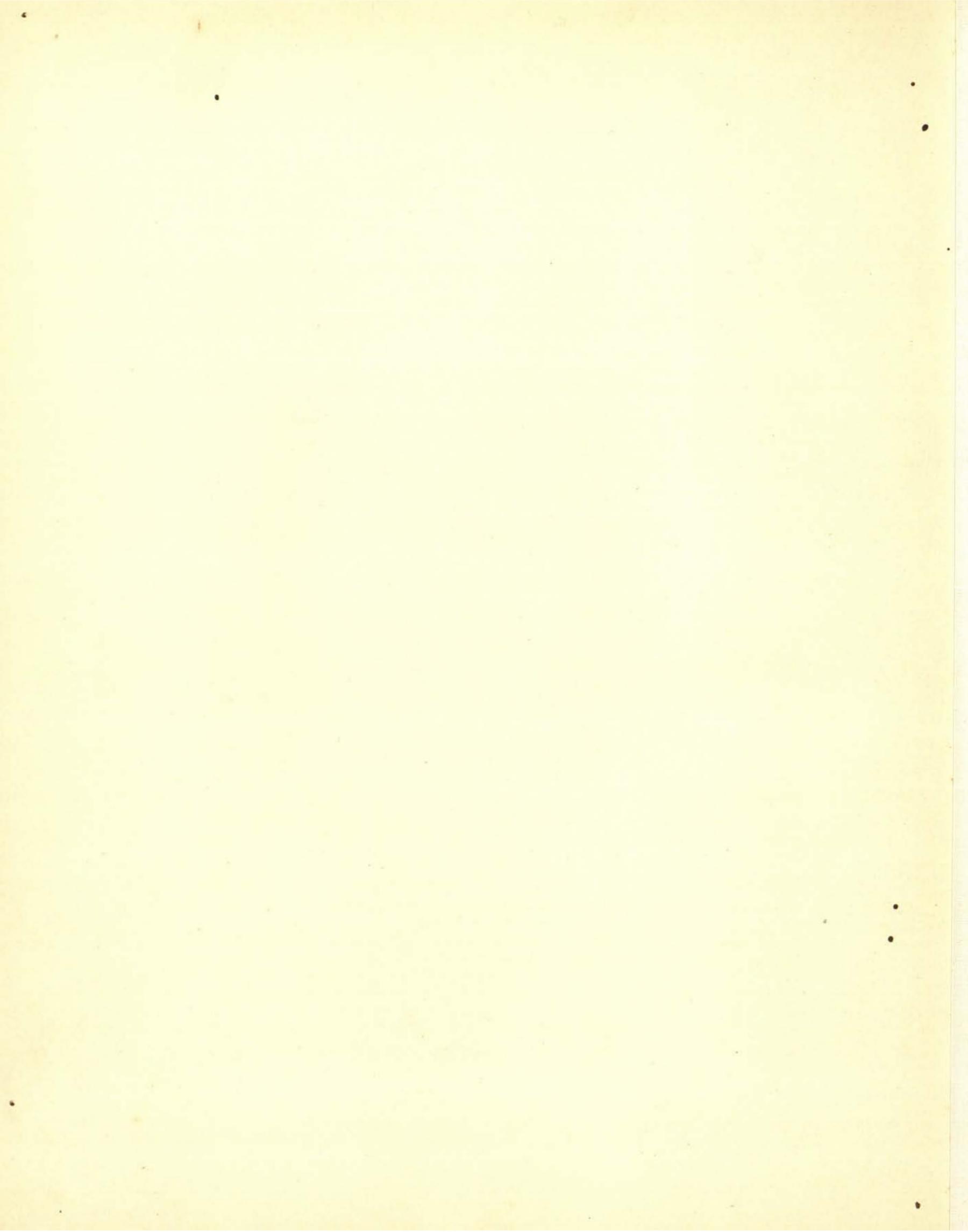


B (2)



B (3)

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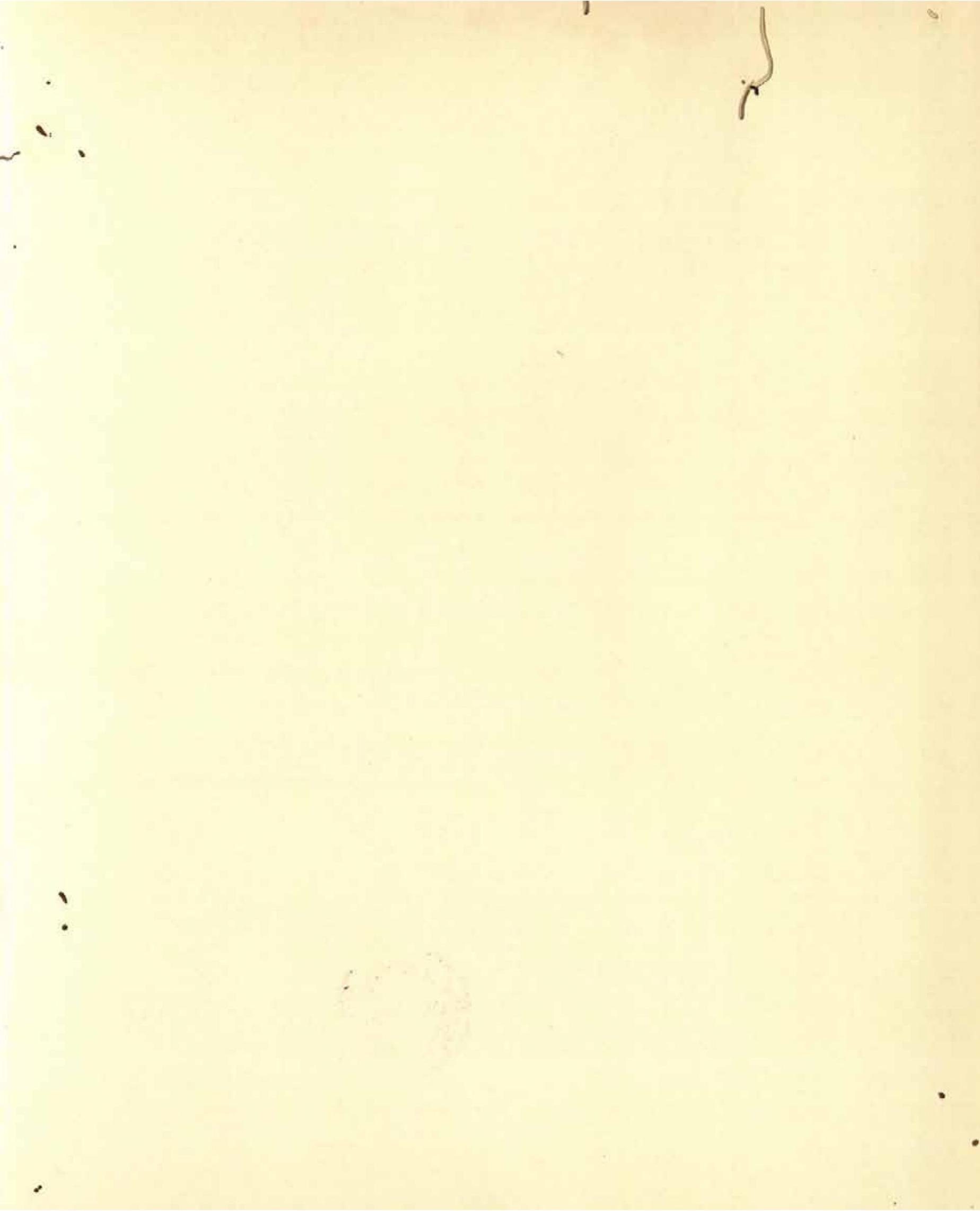
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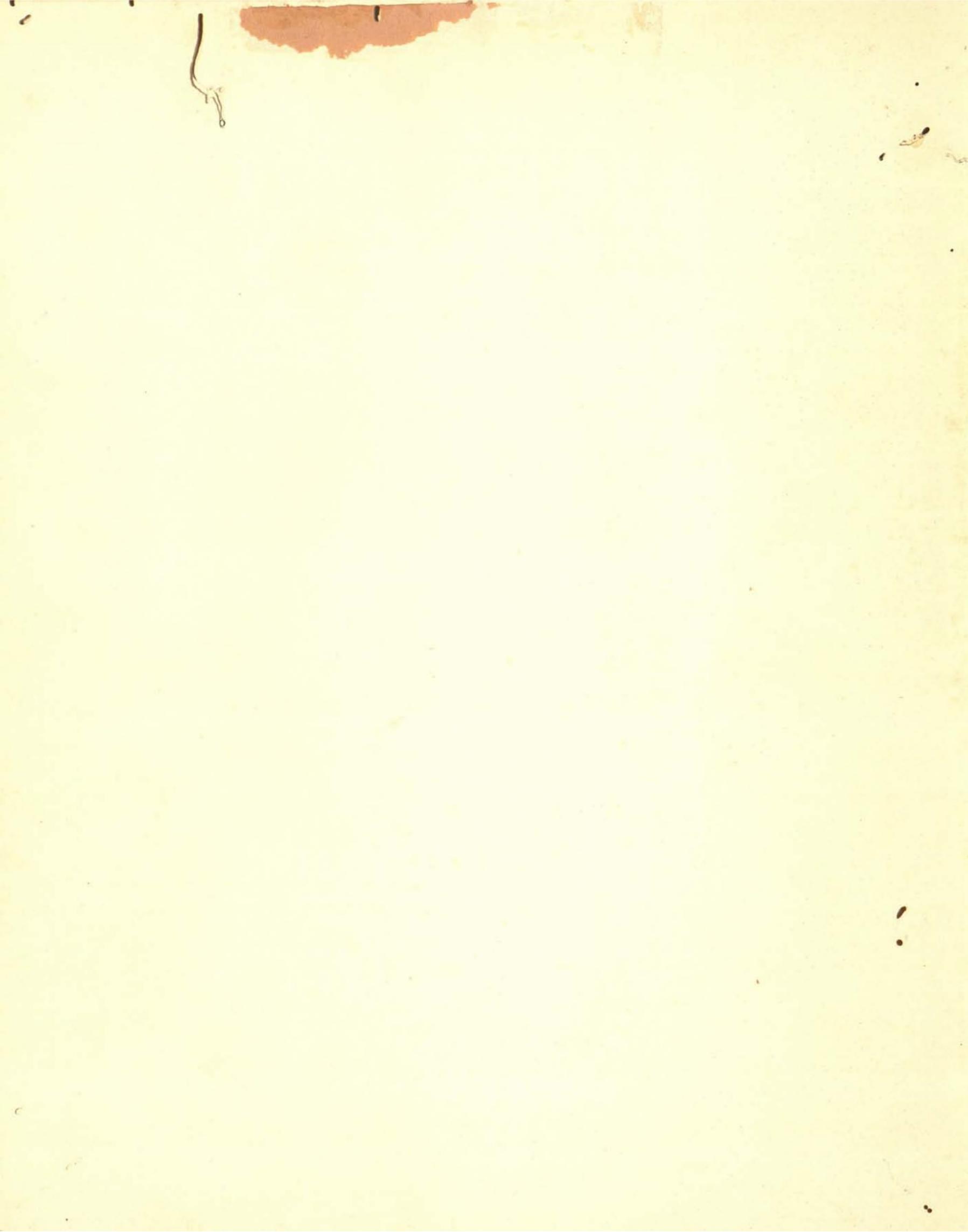
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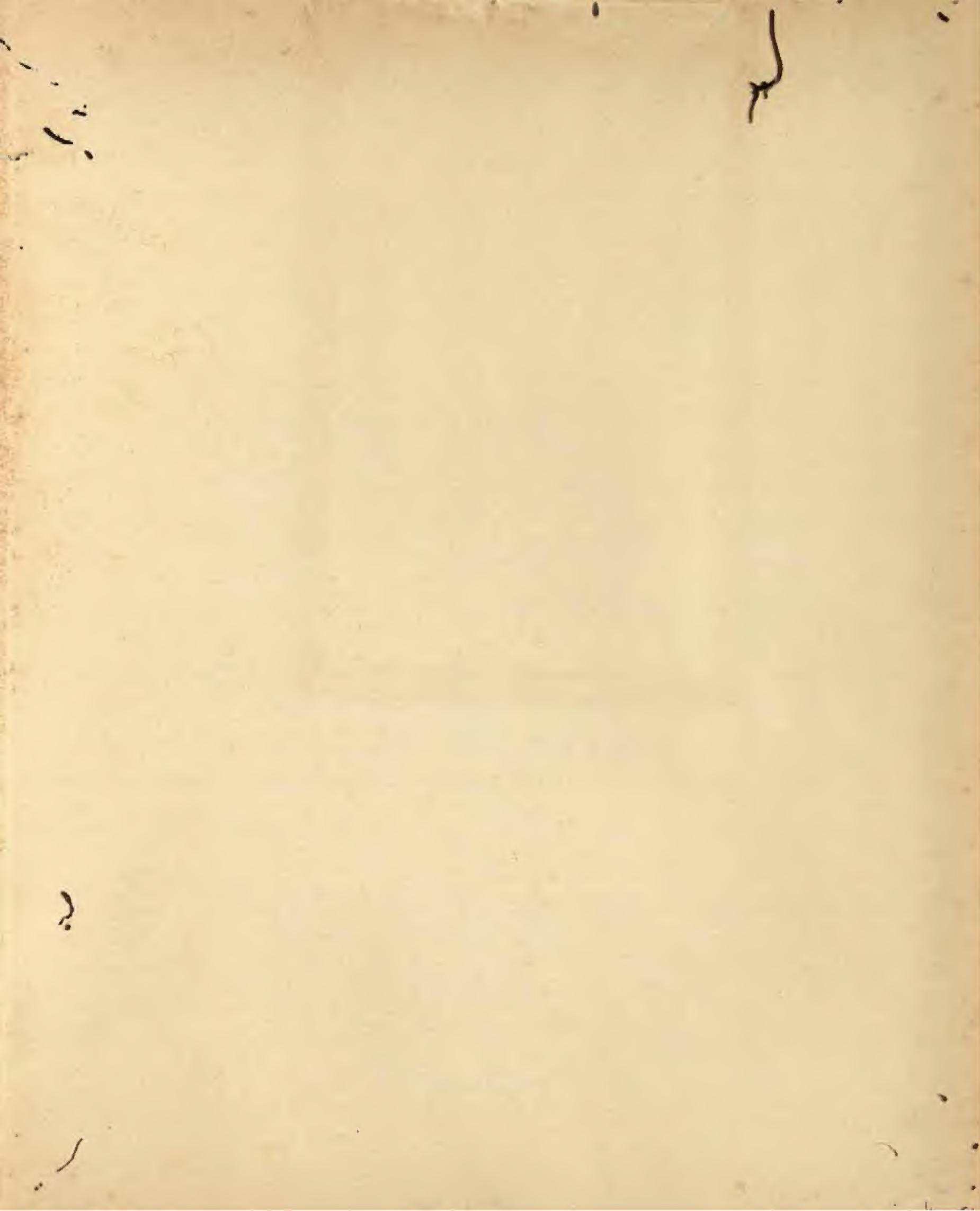
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